The Religious Life of Nabataea

Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

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The Religious Life of Nabataea

By

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Cover illustration: Processional way leading to the Ḥubta high-place in Petra, photograph by Peter Alpass.

The peaks surrounding Petra were topped with high-places in the Nabataean period; processional ways connected each to the town centre. The concentration of religious monuments along these suggests that worshippers would take part in a number of rituals before ceremonies reached a climax at the summit.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEHL	*Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land* (ed. A. Negev and S. Gibson. 2005. New York).
BD	*Die Provincia Arabia* (R. E. Brünnow and A. Domaszewski. 1903–1909. Strasbourg).
CIS	*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*.
D	*Petra und seine Felsheiligtümer* (G. Dalman. 1908. Leipzig).
DNWSI	*Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling. 1995. Leiden).
FD	*Dédan et Lihyan: histoire des Arabes aux confins des pouvoirs perse et hellénistique, IV^{e}–II^{e} s. avant l'ère chrétienne* (S. Farès-Drappeau. 2005. Lyon).
GIN	*Greek Inscriptions from the Negev* (A. Negev. 1981. Jerusalem).
H	*The Nabataean Tomb Inscriptions of Meda'in Salih* (J. Healey. 1993. Oxford).
IGLS	*Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*.
IGR	*Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes*.
JS I, II	*Mission archéologique en Arabie* (A. Jaussen and R. Savignac. 1909 [I], 1914 [II]. Paris).
JSLih	*Textes lihyanites* in JS I and JS II.
JSMin	*Textes minéens* in JS I and JS II.
JSNab	*Textes nabatéens* in JS I and JS II.
JSTam	*Textes thamoudéens* in JS I and JS II.
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (ed. E. Stern. 1993–2008. Jerusalem).
PAT	*Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (ed. D. Hillers and E. Cussini. 1996. Baltimore).
PPUAES	*Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria* in 1904–05 and 1909 (H. C. Butler. 1907–1949. Leiden).
Quellen	*Quellen zur Geschichte der Nabatäer* (U. Hackl, H. Jenni and C. Schneider. 2003. Freiburg).
RES	*Répertoire d'Épigraphie Sémitique*.
RIC	*Roman Imperial Coinage*.
RRC	*Roman Republican Coinage*.
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*.

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Map 1. Settlements of the Nabataean Kingdom.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The desert landscapes of Nabataea and their ancient inhabitants seem to have held a natural fascination for scholars over the past two centuries. Their position on the periphery of the Graeco-Roman world meant that only a handful of reports about the kingdom were ever made by ancient authors. Those that survive contain some of the literary topoi typical of descriptions of exotic faraway peoples, suggesting that the Nabataeans remained mysterious even to their contemporaries. Similar preconceptions fuelled the imaginations of the modern Orientalists who began to explore the region in earnest during the nineteenth century. Their discovery of the spectacular and enigmatic remains of Petra, long abandoned but wonderfully preserved, was only the beginning of the process of raising Nabataea from the sand. As more and more antiquities were brought under the Nabataean umbrella, the image was soon constructed of a distinctive Nabataean culture. The Nabataeans followed a particular lifestyle, used a particular kind of pottery, spoke a particular language, and worshipped particular 'Nabataean' gods in a particular way. In the background were romantic ideas of a sophisticated 'Arab' kingdom, with a strong national identity, bravely clinging to independence under the shadow of Rome.

This culturally monolithic Nabataea persisted in scholarship throughout much of the twentieth century. More recently, however, cracks have begun to appear and emphasis has rather been placed on the diversity found within the kingdom. In his study of the Roman Near East, for example, Fergus Millar notes that "it was made up of a number of strikingly different cultural zones" and that its "complex geographical and social pattern would alone make very difficult any confident characterisation of the culture of the region".[1] John Healey notes the lack of homogeneity in a number of cultural aspects across the region, and Laïla Nehmé has drawn attention to the differences between various parts of the kingdom and how this should affect our approach to the Nabataeans.[2] Most visible

[1] Millar 1993 p. 398.
[2] Healey 2001 pp. 33–34; Nehmé *et al.* 2006 p. 52.

of these is the landscape itself. Map 1 shows the settlements under the control of the Nabataean king during the height of his power in the first centuries BC and AD. It does not attempt to draw the borders of the kingdom, as the limits of Nabataean control and influence cannot be, and most probably were not, marked out in any definite manner across the desert. The kingdom stretched southwards from the Hauran in southern Syria to Hegra in Saudi Arabia, covering almost 700 kilometres, and westwards from the oasis at Duma almost to the Nile delta, covering about the same distance. The black basalt landscape of the Hauran, where the fertile soil receives enough rainfall to make agriculture profitable, is a very different place from the drier mountainous terrain surrounding Petra, or from the sandier desert around Hegra. Different landscapes necessitated different socio-economic modes of existence. Whereas nomadic pastoralism must have been predominant in the south, for example, a settled agricultural existence was more viable in the north. Such fundamental differences in social patterns must be representative of a similar variety in religious practices and beliefs.

Closely linked to, and partially responsible for, the construction of this image of Nabataea is a lack of proper caution over the definitions and terms used by scholars. We are used to hearing that 'the Nabataeans' lived in a particular way, 'the Nabataeans' fought a particular enemy, 'the Nabataeans' used a particular kind of architecture, and that 'the Nabataeans' worshipped this or that deity. As such, a building becomes an example of 'Nabataean architecture', a pot of 'Nabataean ceramics', a deity of 'Nabataean religion', and so on. Such language inevitably increases the impression of a strong cultural cohesion and unity among the peoples living in Nabataea, and there is seldom any attention paid to exactly what is meant by 'the Nabataeans' or 'Nabataean *x*'. More care has sometimes been taken since the recent emphasis on cultural variety in the kingdom. The response has been, instead of labelling every find from the region as 'Nabataean', an attempt to define a more limited body of evidence as representative of the 'true' Nabataean culture. Only certain areas, buildings, gods etc. are now 'Nabataean', the rest being the product of foreign or local influences. Architecture and sculpture are the clearest example here. The progression of styles and features that originated in the Graeco-Roman world can be easily detected in the tomb facades of Petra, for example. These are then identified as exterior, and characterised as an almost polluting influence on the 'pure' Nabataean style.

With regard to architecture, the model of a steady degradation of a 'Nabataean' style as a result of Hellenistic influences has recently been

shown to be too simplistic to account for the multitude of forms found in Nabataea.[3] Defining a distinctly Nabataean style is also problematic, especially one that covers the whole of the kingdom. Like other cultural aspects, diversity forces a smaller and smaller body of evidence to be categorised as 'Nabataean', inevitably reducing it to the material from Petra and anything similar. In a similar manner, 'the Nabataeans', as the agents of this particular material culture, become an ever shrinking group within Nabataea. Various social explanations are invoked to explain this. 'The Nabataeans', for example, were perhaps one tribe in control of a number of other tribes, or perhaps when some portion of 'the Nabataeans' settled they lost touch with the traditions of their elders and were seduced by newer 'foreign' influences. There may be truth in these, but the evidence cannot give us any certainty. The accounts of contemporary authors describe a group called 'the Nabataeans', usually in a military or political context, but there is no internal evidence to help us understand how being Nabataean was understood by those living within the kingdom.[4] Certainly, as many inscriptions testify, they recognised the hegemony of "the king of the Nabataeans", but whether the authors of such texts identified themselves as 'Nabataean', and in what contexts they may have done so, is much less certain. Increasingly, then, 'Nabataean' has been reduced to its political sense, designating all those living under the control of the Nabataean king.[5] It is in this sense that the term will be used here, 'the Nabataeans' indicates all those living in Nabataea, and 'Nabataean *x*' the products of those people.

For our purposes, then, defining Nabataea, i.e. the area under the control of the Nabataean king, becomes essential and will define the scope of this study. Traditionally, two indicators were used to determine whether a particular location was part of Nabataea. Firstly, the presence of inscriptions written in the Nabataean dialect of Aramaic, and secondly finds of a particular type of very thin and delicate pottery, which seems to have

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[3] See, for example, Schmid 2001a.

[4] It has been noted several times that instances of people explicitly identifying themselves as 'Nabataean' only appear after the kingdom has been annexed to the Roman Empire. These are a Greek inscription from Nemara (*IGR* III.1257, although the translation as 'Nabataean' is uncertain (see Macdonald 1991 p. 106 n. 38)), a Palmyrene inscription from Palmyra (*PAT* 0319), and a 'Safaitic text' from north-east Jordan (Clark 1979 no. 661). See in general Knauf 1989a pp. 56–57.

[5] E.g. Graf 2004 p. 150: "From this perspective, what we call "Nabataean" and understand as an ethnicon is better seen as the designation of a 'state' involving the integration of various indigenous Arab groups into a political framework or system."

been produced at Petra and which is characterised by certain designs. As several scholars have since commented, however, both indicators are neither chronologically nor geographically limited to the kingdom.[6] There are numerous instances where the script has been found in clearly non-Nabataean contexts, and it continued to be used until at least the fifth century AD.[7] Similarly, 'Nabataean pottery' continued to be produced long after the kingdom was annexed to Rome in AD 106. A more accurate indicator, which forms the basis of map 1, is the use of the Nabataean era in inscriptions. It seems likely that those places where it was the common practice to date texts by the regnal year of the Nabataean king were under his control. There are very occasional exceptions and ambiguities, but there are also some signs of a high degree of sensitivity to political changes in the use of dating eras, where much more specific and robust data can be gathered than by reference to other aspects of material culture or to the literary sources.[8]

Religion

Recent work on religious practices and beliefs in the Roman Near East has emphasised the importance of variety and of approaching the material first and foremost from a local perspective.[9] The approach of picking apart 'Western' and 'Eastern' influences has given way to more detailed attention for local expressions of piety. The cults of Nabataea, however, have so far largely remained immune to such changes in methodology. Similarly, the deconstruction of 'the Nabataeans', as outlined above, has yet to penetrate into the religious sphere. Some studies have, however, rightly begun to recognise the analysis of religion as a firmly social and cultural phenomenon.[10] In a famous study, Clifford Geertz characterises religion as "a synopsis of cosmic order, a set of religious beliefs, [which] is also a gloss upon the mundane world of social relationships and psychological events".[11] He goes on to explain how religious beliefs are also a "template" for human behaviour: "They do not merely interpret social and psychological processes in cosmic terms . . . but they shape them".

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6 See, for example, Healey 2001 pp. 10–11, 2007 p. 45 and Macdonald 2003a.
7 See Nehmé 2008 pp. 49–52.
8 The method is particularly useful in the Hauran, see below pp. 178–181.
9 See, for example, Kaizer 2006 and 2008.
10 E.g. Healey 2001 pp. 2–3.
11 Geertz 1973 p. 124.

Social and cultural patterns and religious beliefs are closely linked, and the impact of one sphere on the other must be expected and recognised.

When considering the variety and diversity evident in the social and cultural patterns of Nabataea, then, it is surprising that this has largely not yet affected how the religious sphere is studied. There has been recognition of diversity though, and of the difficulties of defining exactly what might be classified as the particularly 'Nabataean' religious traditions. Starcky, for example, concludes that "il est pratiquement impossible de déterminer dans leur religion ce qui est spécifiquement nabatéen".[12] Explanations of broad social divisions, usually between one 'Nabataean' group that has maintained its traditions and another that has been seduced by outside influences, are sometimes invoked to explain this. A recent example is Bartlett's conclusion that "one suspects that while the plebeian heart of Nabataean religion remained fiercely Semitic and somewhat uncompromising (witness the surviving aniconism of the god Dushara), the Nabataean rulers were glad to adorn their temples with softer and more pleasing effects from the Graeco-Roman world".[13] Healey seems to choose a more geographical explanation: "there is clearly enough evidence, epigraphic and archaeological, from the central Nabataean territories . . . to allow us to be certain that the Nabataean kingdom did have its own constellation of religious values".[14] He therefore makes the focus of his work the reconstruction of this "Classical Nabataean religious tradition of the Nabataean kingdom".[15] If the extraneous elements, then, can be isolated and cast aside, we will arrive back to the truly 'Nabataean religion'. Such an approach inevitably results in certain aspects, those more closely linked to the kingdom, being emphasised, while variety and complexity is downplayed or overlooked.

This type of preconception has informed the methodological approaches to Nabataea's religious practices and beliefs. There are two studies that stand out in the field above all others: Jean Starcky's overview of Nabataean history and culture published in a supplement of the *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, and John Healey's monograph *The Religion of the Nabataeans: A Conspectus*.[16] A number of smaller studies have approached the subject,

[12] Starcky 1966 col. 985.
[13] Bartlett 2007 pp. 75–76.
[14] Healey 2001 p. 11.
[15] *Ibid.* p. 12.
[16] Starcky 1966 and Healey 2001.

but none in the detail of these two.[17] Healey's volume is particularly valuable for its collecting of the many religious inscriptions produced in Nabataea, which were otherwise scattered in numerous and sometimes rare publications. The methodology of both works is very similar. The focus is firmly on the gods, and on reconstructing the characteristics and nature of those deities that inhabited the divine world of the Nabataeans. As such, the material is divided by deity. There is, for example, a section on the god Dushara, then another on the goddess Allat, and so on until all the deities are covered. All the material relating to that particular god is collected and analysed to reconstruct what 'the Nabataeans' believed about their characteristics and personalities. The assumption is of a coherent system of religious beliefs throughout the kingdom, and therefore that if the fragments that survive are fitted together properly we can begin to reconstruct a coherent picture. Attention is also paid to cult practices, but usually in isolation from how the gods were perceived, which is always the central matter.

Once the deities have been reconstructed, attention is paid to characterising the system as a whole. Inevitably, this process involves smoothing any apparent unevenness in the material and reducing complexities in order to reach the 'core system of beliefs'. Links are therefore made between the personalities of the different deities. Dushara is a male supreme god, so is Baalshamin. When a worshipper makes a dedication to Baalshamin in Bosra, and another does the same for Dushara in Petra, then, they are really dealing with the same deity, only under different names. In this way, composite deities are constructed, and the deity of a particular temple might be the god 'Dushara—Baalshamin—Qos' or the goddess 'Allat—al-'Uzza'. As such, the theory of there really being only two 'Nabataean gods', a male and female, has taken hold.[18] Never mind that they are worshipped under different names, we have reached beyond this to understand their character. A passage of Herodotus is often invoked as supporting this:

> Διόνυσον δὲ θεῶν μοῦνον καὶ τὴν Οὐρανίην ἡγέονται εἶναι . . . ὀνομάζουσι δὲ τὸν μὲν Διόνυσον Ὀροτάλτ, τὴν δὲ Οὐρανίην Ἀλιλάτ. (III. 8)

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[17] Zayadine 1989; Gawlikowski 1990; Merklein and Wenning 1997; Bartlett 2007.

[18] This in particular forms the central conclusion of Healey's thesis: "The Nabataeans appear to have worshipped few deities and it is possible to interpret the evidence as indicating really only two, what we have called the Nabataean God and the Nabataean Goddess" (Healey 2001 p. 181).

> They [the Arabians] believe in no other gods except Dionysus and Urania . . . They call Dionysus, Orotalt; and Aphrodite, Alilat. (Trans. adapted from Godley).

It is thought, then, that Herodotus' system of two deities can be found in the evidence from Nabataea. The next step, taken by both Starcky and Healey, is to suggest that, as it really has only two deities, 'Nabataean religion' was en route to monotheism.[19]

There are numerous difficulties with such a formulation. Most problematic is the attempt to recover the character or personality of the deities from the fragmentary material. In many cases, the only contemporary evidence we have for a particular deity is his or her name in an inscription. Only very seldom is any further information given to indicate how he/she was perceived. Ignoring the diversity of the many different names found throughout Nabataea, then, and trying to merge them together, seems immediately contrary to the most basic and established facts about Nabataea's gods. Furthermore, there is no sign that the ancient worshippers saw their gods as the composite characters constructed by modern scholars.[20] A Nabataean made a dedication to Dushara, to Baalshamin, or to Qos, not to 'Baalshamin—Dushara—Qos'. These 'gods' seem rather to be categories devised by scholars, a mechanism by which the very diverse evidence can be simplified in order to establish the patterns and consistencies that must be present in 'Nabataean religion'. They are the product of a modern viewpoint and mentality that is intent on imposing structure and order, perhaps even a Pantheon, and do not seem to represent what the inhabitants of Nabataea 'believed' and how they worshipped. It is also a modern viewpoint that wants to see monotheism as the eventual end point of religious systems.[21] To consider that anyone walking through Petra, let alone Nabataea as a whole, in the Nabataean period would emerge with the sense of an impending monotheism cannot be the conclusion when the evidence is analysed in its proper context. On the contrary, the diversity and vibrancy of polytheistic beliefs is evident.

To return to the methodology behind these models, it is the assumption of a strong Nabataean religious tradition or system that is essential.

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[19] Starcky 1966 col. 986; Healey 2001 pp. 189–191. Kaizer 2003 p. 191 provides a critique of this aspect of Healey's model.

[20] We should note that 'composite' deities were worshipped elsewhere in the Near East, most famously in the cult sponsored by Antiochus of Commagene at Nemrud Dagh, but there is no sign of this kind of religious conception from Nabataea.

[21] For a criticism of this in the Nabataean context, see Dirven 2002 col. 612.

Healey states this explicitly: "Methodologically, however, we are committed to the view that there is a system at work".[22] Undoubtedly, there were complex systems of broadly coherent beliefs held by some groups in Nabataea, but it would be dangerous to base a study of Nabataea as a whole on such an assumption, particularly in light of the diversity evident in other aspects of material culture. Doing so places the cart before the horse, and seems the result of the lingering influence of the scholarly construction of the culturally monolithic Nabataea: 'The Nabataeans' must have followed a 'Nabataean religion', and when it becomes clear, as it soon does on closer inspection, that there is considerable variety in practices and beliefs, then some material must be classed as 'non-Nabataean'. The great danger in such a conception, and particularly in organising the material around particular gods, is that it introduces arbitrary divisions and does not always manage to consider the material in its proper context. An inscription mentioning Dushara from Hegra, for example, is not considered in the context of other material from Hegra, but brought alongside texts from Bosra, Petra and anywhere else where he is mentioned. Given the undoubted importance of the social context in shaping religious practice, this approach does not seem most appropriate to bring us closest to understanding how the inhabitants of Nabataea worshipped. There is a danger that any model produced is the result of the modern scholar's ability to take a bird's-eye view of the material, scattered over huge distances, which most ancient worshippers were unlikely to have seen. Their religious beliefs were firmly rooted in much more local experiences, and it is therefore from this perspective that this study will be based.

Rather than organising the material by deity, then, this study will proceed on a geographical basis, with the religious patterns of the different regions and centres of Nabataea analysed in turn. The evidence is not spread evenly throughout the kingdom. Most comes from the urban centres or a handful of relatively small regions, and seems to fall naturally into five coherent groups. Each chapter below therefore covers one of these groups. There are a few cult sites which do not fit into these groups, and any relevant evidence from them will be included where seems most appropriate. It is not essential, in any case, that every scrap of evidence is given detailed analysis here. The central question to be tackled is whether we can discern any coherent religious system at play that is distinctive to the Nabataean kingdom. Only when each region has been covered, with

[22] Healey 2001 p. 6.

the material analysed in its proper context and the best possible understanding reached, will this be discussed in the Conclusion. The scope of this study is determined by the narrow political definition of Nabataea as outlined above. It includes the material produced under the control of the Nabataean king, and covers the period from the late fourth century BC, when the Nabataeans first appear in the historical record, to AD 106, when Nabataea was annexed by Rome to form the Province of Arabia. Later material will only be included with great care when it can be reliably used to advance our understanding of the earlier period.

Society

As explained above, understanding the different societies in Nabataea should be central to our understanding of religion in the kingdom. As with our analysis of religion, any attempt to categorise or neatly define 'Nabataean society' (i.e. the way of life of the inhabitants of the area we label Nabataea) will encounter innumerable difficulties in attempting to include the very diverse groups living in this area. Any more detailed information on the social patterns of each region, therefore, will be given in the relevant chapters below. It will be useful, however, to provide an introduction to the different models that have been advanced and some of the methodological problems they have tackled. Inescapable here is the fact that much of the population of Nabataea led a primarily nomadic lifestyle, and any attempt to understand 'Nabataean society' must take into account the interaction between nomadic and sedentary groups.

Studies of modern nomadic societies have blurred any firm distinction between nomadic and sedentary groups, and rather emphasised interaction, symbiosis, and the existence of various stages of semi-nomadism.[23] Nomadism, for example, is not a completely self-sufficient lifestyle, and requires contact and exchange with settled groups. It is clear that Nabataea must be described in some sense as 'semi-nomadic'. The evidence examined in the chapters below seems mostly to be the product of settled populations, but the signs of nomadic groups are never far away. Because of its scattered nature, this evidence is so far much less understood than the more urban material. However, looking outside the towns and into the desert, whether it be just to the east of the Hauran or to the

[23] See, for example, Barth 1956, Banning 1986, Khazanov 1994 and Betts 2001.

landscapes between Petra and Hegra, for example, one finds thousands of inscriptions written in a mixture of languages, primarily Aramaic and the Ancient North Arabian dialects.[24] The cataloguing and analysis of these is still only in its primary stages, and there is clearly much potential for our understanding of their authors to develop.[25] It is clear, however, that at least some were produced by nomadic pastoralists, while others may have been written by trade caravans moving between the urban centres. However, none of the models advanced by modern anthropologists as to the components and functioning of modern semi-nomadic groups can be easily laid over Nabataea.[26]

Knauf has attempted to characterise Nabataea as a "Bedouin state", which he defines as being distinct from other nomadic groups by its reliance on the camel.[27] According to this model, "Bedouin states" can be chronologically divided into different groups based on their use of the camel. Nabataea belongs to the "frühbeduinische" phase, in which the Bedouin could fight fully equipped from the saddle. In this model, the state is based militarily on a group of Bedouin tribes, and economically on urban centres in a network of long-distance trade.[28] The chief social unit is the tribe, and the Nabataeans were one such tribal group who had managed to gain ascendancy over the others. Religion played an important role in maintaining their ascendancy, with the king performing a central part in a cult that was spread throughout the kingdom. It is certainly the case that the royal family was important to religious practice in Nabataea, but the model of Knauf has failed to gather a substantial following. Macdonald has criticised many of his interpretations, including the presentation of 'the Nabataeans' as a Bedouin group in control of a settled population and other nomadic tribes throughout their history.[29] He prefers to consider that they settled at some point, and further that the distinction between 'the Nabataeans' and other groups, which is central to Knauf's theory, finds little confirmation in the evidence. A model is suggested whereby the originally nomadic group, 'the Nabataeans', imposed its control over a large area, and the original inhabitants came to identify themselves, in

[24] The most comprehensive overviews of this material are Macdonald 2000 and 2004.
[25] Some examples of these are Macdonald 1993 for the texts from the Hauran, King 1990 for the Hismaic texts of southern Jordan, and al-Theeb 1993 for the texts of north-west Saudi Arabia.
[26] See recently Anderson 2005 pp. 42–51.
[27] See Knauf 1985, 1988, 1989b and 1992.
[28] Knauf 1992 p. 638.
[29] Macdonald 1991.

a political sense, as 'Nabataean'. Subsequently, "the differences between the original tribe and the indigenous population gradually faded".[30] More fundamentally, the concept of a 'Bedouin state' is attacked, in that "Bedouin ideology is inimical to that of a state".[31] Any nomadic group, then, that took on the structures of a Hellenistic state, which the Nabataeans did to some extent, could not remain Bedouin.

Macdonald's model, of a nomadic group that managed to exert control over the existing inhabitants of the region and then became indistinguishable from the settled/nomadic populations, seems closest to the historical data that we have available. He is certainly correct to emphasise the difficulties of marking out 'the Nabataeans' as a distinct cultural group within Nabataea, and this accords well with the problems outlined above with regard to a distinct 'Nabataean religion'. Beyond such broad characterisations, however, there are sparingly few more detailed observations that the evidence will allow us to make. That much of the population was organised into tribal groups seems likely from comparative evidence elsewhere in the Near East, but it largely remains unconfirmed by the epigraphic evidence from Nabataea.[32] Many texts attest groups that call themselves *bny* x (the sons of x), which is how large groups were organised in Palmyra, for example, but there is little sign that these designate more than a family unit. We shall see that the familial level of social organisation is certainly important in our understanding of religious practice.

The problem is that the literary sources are almost devoid of any description of Nabataea's societies, and those that do survive are written by outsiders and are very narrow in their possible application.[33] One particular difficulty is the use of 'Arabs' or 'Arabians' in the ancient sources.[34] Josephus, for example, who gives us the most detail as to the political movements of the Nabataean king, seems to use both 'Ἄραβες/οἱ Ἀράβιοι' and 'οἱ Ναβαταῖοι' to refer to the Nabataeans. Retsö has reviewed this evidence in detail and has attempted to discern a rationale behind the use of the two terms.[35] He concludes that they represent two groups within the kingdom, 'Arabs' being used for the army while 'Nabataeans' "seems to be

[30] *Ibid.* p. 108.
[31] *Ibid.* p. 105.
[32] For the tribal system of Palmyra, see Yon 2002 pp. 57–78 and annex viii.
[33] For an overview of these, see below pp. 23–32.
[34] See, recently, Macdonald 2009a and the proceedings of the colloquium *Les Arabes dans l'Antiquitié* published in *Topoi* 14, 2006.
[35] Retsö 2003 pp. 364–391.

a more local usage, especially in Petra".[36] The model, however, sometimes places too much emphasis on the terminology of the literary sources without taking into account the broader picture. Macdonald's suggestion, that 'Nabataean' refers to the political entity within a much larger, very loosely defined, ethnic group, the 'Arabs', is preferable.[37] It now also seems likely that a spoken form of Old Arabic was widespread in Nabataea, and this has very occasionally appeared written in Aramaic letters.[38] 'Arabs' are designated as such in ancient authors by an ill-defined and inconsistent combination of linguistic and cultural factors that hide a multitude of differences, much as the description does today. In this sense, the majority of Nabataea's population were 'Arabs'. However, we should be very wary of any interpretation that uses this 'Arab' identity as the basis for constructing a coherent cultural group clearly differentiated from those around them.

The literary sources are consistent, however, in their association of the Nabataeans with the trade in incense, spices and other exotic goods from southern Arabia and further afield.[39] The kingdom was well-placed to act as the middleman in the overland trade routes that brought goods to the Mediterranean. Tracking the exact paths that the caravans took remains very difficult, and the lines reproduced in modern maps tend to give a sense of certainty where there is very little evidence. Similarly, very little is known about the exact system of taxes in places, other than that this was relatively high, reflecting the profits to be made.[40] We should also not let the image of the Nabataeans as traders overshadow the other economic activities of the kingdom. A particular talent for water management allowed for the agricultural cultivation on a large scale of landscapes where it would not be possible today, particularly around Petra and Hegra. The climate of the Hauran had always made farming easier here than anywhere else in Nabataea. It must have only ever have been a small proportion of the population that was involved in the caravan trade, either directly or indirectly, with the majority engaged in farming

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[36] *Ibid*. p. 378.

[37] Macdonald 2009a p. 280.

[38] *Ibid*. p. 309.

[39] Graf and Sidebotham 2003 is the most recent general overview of Nabataean trade. Schmid 2004 analyses the organisation of Nabataea's long distance trade routes as revealed by the distribution of pottery. See also Young 2001 pp. 81–122.

[40] Graf and Sidebotham 2003 p. 67 draw attention to a calculation of Pliny that a journey from Thomna in south Arabia to Gaza cost 688 denarii per camel load (*HN* 12.32).

or nomadic pastoralism. Characterising the Nabataeans as traders, then, gives an incomplete picture.

For our purposes, it is more important to consider the impact trade may have had on Nabataea's societies or religious practices. Wenning has considered this with regard to the historical development of the kingdom, and states that he "can see no direct influence caused by the trade relations of the Nabataeans".[41] He concludes that although trade exposed the Nabataeans to influences from east and west, "they managed to retain their identity and the essential issues in their tradition".[42] We have discussed the problem with this kind of formulation above, but Wenning is correct to assert that we can detect no major social changes as a result of trade. It is in any case not clear why we should, considering the majority of the population would not have been involved with the trade caravans. On a more limited scale, however, there are some indications that trade may have impacted on the religious sphere. One example is the dedication at Hegra to the god A'ra, who is only otherwise found in the Hauran at the other end of the kingdom. It is tempting to link such divine movements to the caravan trade, and it is possible that this reflects a much wider and more varied carriage of religious ideas. Unfortunately, however, this cannot be linked specifically to the caravan trade, as the distribution of deities outside their cult centres is not at all uncommon in the Near East and does not need to be explained in the context of trade networks. More specific to Nabataea may be internal paraphernalia of some sanctuaries, which may have been designed with a clientele from the trade caravans in mind and therefore able to incorporate a wide range of deities and beliefs. The sanctuary at Khirbet Dharih is the best example of this, although there is no definite proof.[43]

History

As with our analysis of Nabataean society, our view of Nabataean history is limited by the scarcity of literary sources.[44] We are provided with external viewpoints of their dealings with foreign powers, but there is

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[41] Wenning 2007a p. 299.
[42] *Ibid.* p. 304.
[43] See below p. 222.
[44] For more detailed overviews of Nabataean history see Starcky 1966, Negev 1977, Bowersock 1983, *Quellen* pp. 36–52 and Wenning 2007b.

very little information as to developments within the kingdom. There is no need to provide here a detailed historical account, as it largely does not affect our understanding of religious practices. However, a broad chronological framework will help to place the material in its wider context and also to illuminate some issues central to our understanding of Nabataean society.

There has been much debate as to 'the origin of the Nabataeans'.[45] Linguistic and cultural affinities have been found with pre-existing societies of eastern, southern and northern Arabia, and each of these regions has been advanced as their original homeland. The nomadic nature of some societies of the Arabian Peninsula in this period makes possible the migration of large groups, but it is not particularly clear why such 'solutions' should be proposed in the first place. Macdonald, for example, has commented that he knows of no clear evidence that the Nabataeans originated from anywhere other than the area around Petra.[46] The earliest mention of the group places them in the region at least by the end of the fourth century BC and, given the fragmentary state of our knowledge of the area in the first millennium BC, it is not surprising that the Nabataeans should only be first mentioned then. That the material culture and languages of the region display connections with other areas of the Near East is also entirely to be expected, and does not need to be explained by a large tribal migration. The desire to imagine 'the Nabataeans' moving around the Arabian Peninsula seems to be rather a result of the scholarly construction of Nabataea and its inhabitants as a culturally cohesive tribal group, as explained above.

In any case, the Nabataean king was clearly in control of a large area of north-west Arabia by the end of the fourth century BC, and was important enough to attract the attention of the regional powers.[47] It is not until the second century BC, however, that we begin to hear more about Nabataea's kings and their activities. From the literary sources, coins and inscriptions, it has been possible to reconstruct the following chronology which will be used in the rest of this study:[48]

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[45] See, for example, Milik 1982, Knauf 1986, Graf 1990 and Parr 2003.

[46] Macdonald 2000 p. 47.

[47] See below p. 23 for the first appearance of Nabataea in the historical record with the attack of Antigonus Monopthalmus on Petra in 312 BC. Recently, another very early reference to the Nabataean king has appeared in the epigrams of Posidippus of Pella from the third century BC (AB 10 (II 7–16); see Graf 2006a).

[48] See Wenning 1993a p. 38.

Aretas I	in 168 BC
Aretas II	c. 120/110–96 BC
Obodas I	c. 96–85 BC
Rabbel I	85/84 BC
Aretas III	84–c. 62 BC
Obodas II	c. 62–59 BC
Malichus I	59–30 BC
Obodas III	30–9 BC
Syllaeus & Aretas IV	9 BC
Aretas IV	9 BC–AD 40
Malichus II	AD 40–70
Rabbel II	AD 70–106

In AD 106 the kingdom was annexed by Rome to form the province of Arabia. It is possible that there was a final king, Malichus III, crowned at the time of the annexation, but the evidence is meagre.[49] In any case, he did not prolong the existence of an independent Nabataea.

In the first century BC, the Nabataeans regularly appear as the opponent of the Jewish kingdoms in the accounts of Josephus. Tensions first flared over the city of Gaza in c. 100 BC, when the inhabitants appealed to Aretas II for rescue from the siege of the Hasmonaean king Alexander Jannaeus.[50] Obodas I and Aretas III, who for a time managed to take control of Damascus, also came into conflict with the Jewish king, with successes on both sides. Aretas then became involved in the struggle between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, supporting the former's claim to the Jewish kingdom. At this point (64 BC), however, Rome became involved in the dispute, and Pompey's legate M. Scaurus preferred the claim of Aristobulus. Aretas was ordered to leave Jerusalem with his army.[51] Two years later, Scaurus mounted an expedition against Nabataea itself and was only dissuaded by a sizable bribe.[52] Later, at Rome, he minted coins showing a kneeling Aretas beside a camel offering a branch in submission.[53] From then on, the Nabataean kings would have to recognise and defer to Roman power.

Malichus I proved a generally loyal client king. In 47 BC, he sent military assistance to Caesar for the war in Egypt, and later offered Antony support at Actium.[54] After the battle, he swiftly changed his allegiance and

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[49] Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 42–44.
[50] Josephus *AJ* 13.360.
[51] Josephus *AJ* 14.29.
[52] Josephus *AJ* 14.80.
[53] *RRC* 422; Schmitt-Korte 1991 pp. 145–146, nos 67–70.
[54] Support in Egypt: Josephus *AJ* 14.137; *BJ* 1.194. Support at Actium: Plutarch *Ant.* 61.2.

sent troops to burn the ships that Cleopatra had managed to salvage.[55] By now, however, Nabataea was subject to the movements and whims of the regional powers. In 55 BC, the invasion of another Roman general, Gabinius, was probably only turned away with a bribe.[56] During the Parthian invasion of 41/40 BC, Malichus was forced to make an alliance with the new power, and was promptly punished by Ventidius Bassus with a large fine after he had expelled the invaders.[57] Some years later, Antony granted a part of the kingdom to Cleopatra, although it is by no means clear which part.[58] In 26 BC, a Roman expedition under Aelius Gallus set out for south Arabia, no doubt aimed at gaining a share of the wealth they derived from the trade in incense and spices. The Nabataean king offered guidance and hospitality, but the expedition was a disaster. Strabo places the blame on the Nabataean guide, Syllaeus, whom he portrays as treacherous to the core, but the inhospitable terrain was probably more culpable.[59]

Just after the death of Herod in 4 BC, a curious remark of Strabo has led to some disagreement over the status of Nabataea. On his death, Augustus accepted the division of his kingdom between his children. Bowersock suggests that at this turbulent time the Nabataean kingdom was brought directly under Roman control for a very brief period. He refers to a passage of Strabo describing the Nabataeans as being under the control of the Romans.[60] There is also a gap in Aretas IV's coinage, otherwise the most abundant issues from Nabataea, from 3-1 BC. However, it seems odd that there is no mention of the episode in any other sources, nor any other confirmation by Strabo himself, who speaks of Nabataea as an independent kingdom. Furthermore, there are several similar gaps in Aretas' coinage, and the language of Strabo does not have to be interpreted as meaning that the Romans had direct administrative control over Nabataea, rather that it was a cooperative client kingdom.[61] It seems most likely, then, that the kingdom's independent status was not interrupted.

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[55] Plutarch *Ant*. 69.3.

[56] Josephus *AJ* 14.103; *BJ* 1.178. See Bowersock 1983 p. 35.

[57] Cassius Dio 48.41.5.

[58] See Bowersock 1983 p. 41.

[59] For Strabo's account of the expedition see *Geog*. 16.4.23–24. See also below p. 27.

[60] Strabo *Geog*. 16.4.21: Πρῶτοι δ' ὑπὲρ τῆς Συρίας Ναβαταῖοι καὶ Σαβαῖοι τὴν Εὐδαίμονα Ἀραβίαν νέμονται, καὶ πολλάκις κατέτρεχον αὐτὴν πρὶν ἢ Ῥωμαίων γενέσθαι· νῦν δὲ κἀκεῖνοι Ῥωμαίοις εἰσὶν ὑπήκοοι καὶ Σύροι.

"The first people above Syria that live in Arabia Felix are the Nabataeans and the Sabaeans. They often overran Syria before it became subject to the Romans, but nowadays both they and the Syrians are subject to the Romans." See Bowersock 1983 pp. 54–56.

[61] Millar 1993 p. 44 is not convinced by Bowersock's suggestion.

During the first century AD, Nabataea again nearly fell victim to Roman displeasure. Old tensions with the Jewish kingdom seem to have come to the surface after Herod Antipas expelled his Nabataean wife, daughter of Aretas IV, in favour of his niece Herodias.[62] In response, Aretas invaded and inflicted a major defeat on Herod.[63] The latter, however, appealed to Tiberius, who seems to have considered Aretas' attack on his client king as an unacceptable display of independence. He therefore ordered Vitellius, the governor of Syria, to launch a punitive expedition against Petra. Fortunately for Aretas, Tiberius promptly died and the expedition was called off.[64] Roman control, however, ensured that a Nabataean king would never again try to seize control of territory beyond that granted to him by the emperor. The only large military expeditions we now have evidence for are in support of Roman generals. Malichus II, for example, sent a considerable number of horsemen and infantry to join Titus at the beginning of the first Jewish War.[65]

In AD 106 Rabbel II died and the kingdom was brought under Roman control as the province of Arabia. There remains considerable debate as to the precise circumstances of the annexation, whether it was a peaceful submission or more violent.[66] No ancient source provides any detail, and those mentions of it that do survive are too brief to solve the matter.[67] Those who consider that the process was largely peaceful put forward the fact that Trajan never adopted *Arabicus* in his titulature, and that the coins that appeared during his reign proclaimed *Arabia Adquisita* not *Arabia Capta.*[68] Proponents of a violent struggle point to different evidence. Several 'Safaitic' texts from the Hauran, for example, may record a conflict

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[62] Josephus *AJ* 18.109–112.

[63] Josephus *AJ* 18.112–114.

[64] The exact chronology of this episode has been difficult to establish. See Bowersock 1983 pp. 65–68.

[65] Josephus *BJ* 3.68.

[66] See, for example, Bowersock 1983 pp. 76–85, Funke 1989, Freeman 1996, *Quellen* pp. 52–56 and Graf 2007a p. 173.

[67] Cass. Dio 68.14: "Κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον χρόνον καὶ Πάλμας τῆς Συρίας ἄρχων τὴν Ἀραβίαν τὴν πρὸς τῇ Πέτρᾳ ἐχειρώσατο καὶ Ῥωμαίων ὑπήκοον ἐποιήσατο."

"About this time, Palma, the governor of Syria, subdued the part of Arabia around Petra and made it subject to the Romans." Trans. Cary.

Amm. Marc. 14.8.13: "hanc provinciae inposito nomine rectoreque adtributo obtemperare legibus nostris Traianus conpulit imperator."

"It was given the name of a province, assigned a governor, and compelled to obey our laws by the emperor Trajan." Trans. Rolfe.

See Bowersock 1983 pp. 79–80.

[68] *RIC* II p. 278.

with the Romans, but these cannot be dated precisely and their meaning is very obscure.[69] Destruction layers found in various archaeological excavations have also been explained by the annexation.[70] Again, however, there is usually little certainty that these can be dated so precisely, or that the damage was the result of deliberate and not accidental violence. Bowersock's conclusion, that "the evidence . . . implies a military presence and perhaps even some military skirmishes, but no major conflict" seems preferable.[71] The problem may be one of perspective and scale. From the Roman perspective, no major conflict had taken place, particularly with the emperor currently engaged in the war in Dacia. From the local perspective, however, the entry of Roman troops and any resistance it might have sparked would have been a more serious matter.

Discovering Nabataea

It is only possible to produce this study thanks to three centuries of scholarly investigation into this part of the Near East, during which Nabataea has slowly emerged from the scattered reports brought back to Europe. The process began with the identification and decipherment of graffiti from the Sinai, some of which were made available in printed editions at the beginning of the eighteenth century.[72] The texts were first interpreted as the writings of the Israelites produced during their forty years' wandering in the wilderness. The theory sparked considerable interest, and expeditions were sent to the Sinai to discover more inscriptions. The connection with the Israelites, however, was soon cast into doubt and it was realised that the vast majority of the texts were short signatures. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, W. J. Bankes copied the first texts from Petra, and so immediately connected the Sinaitic texts with the Nabataeans. It was not until 1840, however, that the script was deciphered with the work of the German scholar E. F. F. Beer.[73] He recognised nearly all the characters and again made the connection with Petra and the Nabataeans. Despite fierce objections from adherents of the old theory, it soon became clear that the texts were produced in the centuries

[69] For the Romans in 'Safaitic' texts, see Macdonald 1993 pp. 328–334.
[70] E.g. Schmid 2001c p. 401.
[71] Bowersock 1983 p. 81.
[72] See Taylor 2002 pp. 148–171 and Lewis and Macdonald 2003a for what follows.
[73] Beer 1840.

around the time of Christ.[74] Soon after their publication a connection was made with inscriptions from the Hauran, and so they and the material culture associated with them was also brought into the discussion of the Nabataeans.

Meanwhile, in 1812, the Swiss explorer Johann Burckhardt had made the extraordinary discovery of Petra.[75] He only visited the site for a day, under considerable suspicion from his local guide, and did not have time to record many details. News of his discovery, however, travelled quickly, and an increasing number of European and American expeditions arrived at Petra in the first half of the nineteenth century. The drawings and paintings they produced firmly planted the city and the Nabataeans into the imaginations of scholars and the wider public.[76] At about the same time, visitors were also reaching other areas of the kingdom. In 1805, for example, the German Ulrich Jasper Seetzen brought back the first reports of the antiquities from the Hauran.[77] There was considerable peril involved for these early explorers, both in the suspicion they aroused and the conditions they faced. Seetzen himself, for example, was assassinated in Yemen in 1811, while Burckhardt died of dysentery in Cairo in 1817. Finally, the southern parts of the kingdom were reached towards the end of the century. In 1876, Charles Doughty joined a caravan of pilgrims leaving Damascus for Mecca, and on the way came across the ruins of Hegra.[78] His report of the inscriptions and tombs, so similar to those at Petra, ensured that he would soon be followed by many others.

The inscriptions collected by many of the early explorers were published in the second part of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, of which the first volume was completed in 1889. This remains the most comprehensive and wide-ranging collection of Nabataean texts, although some of the readings and translations are now badly out of date. Around the turn of the century, more scientific and systematic investigations began throughout the kingdom. The Dominican Fathers, Jaussen and Savignac, led a series of expeditions between 1907 and 1910 to the region of Hegra, collecting many new texts and providing some detailed recordings of the monuments.[79] At about the same time, Howard Crosby Butler

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[74] See Taylor 2002 p. 150.
[75] See below p. 39 for more detail.
[76] See Llewellyn 2003.
[77] See below p. 169.
[78] See below p. 132.
[79] Jaussen and Savignac 1909–1922.

of Princeton University led a large team to Syria, recording the texts and archaeological remains in the Hauran.[80] In Petra, Brünnow and Domaszewski made the first systematic and comprehensive recordings of the tomb facades as part of a wider-ranging examination of Provincia Arabia.[81] Soon after, Gustaf Dalman did the same for the rock-cut monuments.[82] Alongside these should be mentioned the monumental works of Alois Musil, a Czech scholar who spent much of his time in the Near East and who published a lengthy description of Arabia Petraea.[83] Each of these works remains fundamental to the study of the different regions of Nabataea. We shall see that in many cases their conclusions have been superseded by more recent work, but the scope and detail of these early investigators have rarely been matched.

The first excavations at Petra took place in 1929, but it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that regular archaeological investigations began in the city and elsewhere in the kingdom. In the meantime, as Avraham Negev has described, it was "a very small group of archaeologists who kept Nabatean history and archaeology alive".[84] Foremost among these were Jean Starcky and Josef Milik, who continued to bring to light new inscriptions and form new interpretations of Nabataean history and culture. In Petra, Peter Parr and Philip Hammond led frequent projects of excavation and restoration, while Negev himself was engaged with Nabataean remains in the Negev. More recent years, however, have seen a considerable resurgence in interest. An ever increasing number of European and American archaeologists have now joined the Jordanian authorities in investigating different aspects of Petra. In Syria, French archaeologists have produced detailed reports from the Hauran in the past few decades, while Israeli excavations have continued in the Negev. Much, however, remains to be discovered, and there is still enormous potential for new material to deepen and modify our understanding of Nabataea. Hegra might be the best example, where excavations of the urban centre have only just begun, but we have only so far scratched the surface of the kingdom as a whole. We are fortunate that, in many places, the ancient remains have largely avoided interference by more modern construction.

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80 *PPUAES*.
81 Brünnow and Domaszewski 1904–1909.
82 Dalman 1908 and 1912.
83 Musil 1907–1908.
84 Negev in Patrich 1990 p. 9.

This, combined with the arid environment, has ensured that Nabataea has many secrets still to reveal.

Sources

Inscriptions

Thousands of Aramaic inscriptions have been recorded from Nabataea, and there are many more awaiting publication. They are by far our most valuable source for cult practices and beliefs, providing the only contemporary attestations produced by the worshippers themselves. It will not be necessary to cite specific texts here, as they are brought into the discussions of the different regions below where relevant. However, it will be useful to provide a general characterisation of the types of texts we find and the scripts they are written in.[85]

Although the number of surviving inscriptions and graffiti produced by Nabataeans is large, the vast majority are little more than signatures recording personal names.[86] These litter the desert landscapes and routes of communication through which the nomads and trade caravans moved between Nabataea's centres of population. A number of them carry a theophoric element (e.g. *'bdmnwtw*, 'servant of Manotu'), but it is doubtful how much insight they can provide as to the cultic situation. As Macdonald has demonstrated, other factors, such as strong family traditions, have more to do with the choice of personal names than any other social pressure.[87] A blessing could often accompany a personal name, most commonly in the formulae *slm x* (Peace to *x*), *dkyr x* (Remembered be *x*), and *bryk x* (Blessed be *x*). Occasionally a deity's name is also attached to the end of the phrase—*dkyr x qdm y* (Remembered be *x* before *y*). Healey provides a more detailed analysis of these formulae and how they were conceived.[88] It seems that the intention was for passers-by to read the name aloud, thereby reinforcing the praise or blessing of the named individual. Of the surviving texts more substantial than these, we are fortunate that many are related to the religious sphere. Most belong to one of two categories, firstly those commemorating the construction or repair of a temple, and

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[85] See Macdonald 2003a and Healey 2007 for more detailed overviews of Nabataea's inscriptions.

[86] See Negev 1991a.

[87] See Macdonald 1999 for a powerful critique of Negev's volume.

[88] Healey 1996; Healey 2001 pp. 175–178.

secondly those recording the dedication of an object to a deity. Funerary texts are also common, most of which are carved on rough stone slabs recording the name and ancestry of the deceased. Much longer texts are attached to Hegra's tomb facades, where the gods are called on to play an active role in protecting the tomb and punishing those who mistreat it.[89]

Most of the inscriptions included here were written in the dialect of Aramaic peculiar to Nabataea, which has several distinctive features setting it apart from other contemporary dialects.[90] Most particularly, it shows the influence of Old Arabic, although it is not pronounced enough to demonstrate that the Nabataeans 'spoke Arabic', as has often been stated. A variety of languages were in use in the areas controlled by the Nabataean kings—different dialects of Aramaic, different dialects of Ancient North Arabian, Greek, and Old Arabic—and making generalisations as to which language 'the Nabataeans' spoke oversimplifies the situation.[91] We shall see that this is particularly complex in the area around Hegra, where Nabataean control was imposed on an area which already had a long history of writing on stone.[92] It is true, however, that most of the material that sheds light on the cults and worshippers of Nabataea, and is therefore analysed here, was written in Aramaic, but to describe this as 'Nabataean' also does not do justice to the complexity of the situation. There are differences, particularly in the script, between the Aramaic texts that have been traditionally labelled 'Nabataean'. Some from the Hauran, for example, are in a much squarer script than those found elsewhere. Defining a 'Nabataean' language or script, then, is problematic, and would inevitably involve restricting the material included to Petra or to a particular social class. It is another area where the conception of a monolithic Nabataean culture has skewed our perception of the region, and given some evidence a much greater significance than it had in antiquity while marginalising other. It is preferable to emphasise that, in the area controlled by the Nabataean kings, a multitude of different languages and scripts were in use, and that this reflects the cultural diversity to be found in the kingdom.

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89 These are discussed in more detail below pp. 23–32.

90 The fullest guide remains Cantineau 1930 and 1932. See also Healey 1993 pp. 55–63; Macdonald 2003a; Healey 2009 pp. 38–40.

91 See particularly Macdonald 2003a p. 50.

92 See below pp. 114–121.

Literature

The Greek and Latin authors that give us any information on Nabataea are few and far between.[93] Most often, the Nabataeans are mentioned only in passing and only to report their involvement in conflicts, either with their Jewish neighbours to the north or in a supportive role to one side in much larger regional conflicts. Only a handful of sources make any mention of Nabataean culture, and there is no surviving document written by a Nabataean describing his religion. Nevertheless, these external viewpoints have played a central part in formulating modern conceptions of Nabataea. They have provided scholars a framework in which the archaeological, sculptural and epigraphic remains can find expression. However, they have too often been applied uncritically, without proper regard for the authorial context, and have been afforded a much greater applicability (to a 'Nabataean culture') than even the ancient authors themselves may have intended. Recently, this imbalance has been partially addressed and more attention has been paid to the limitations of some of these sources, but not all. We shall therefore review them here with particular attention to their usefulness in advancing our understanding of religious practice in the Nabataean period.

Two accounts, from Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, are invoked in nearly every lengthy study of Nabataean society. Diodorus, in his account of the wars of the Diadochi, records the expedition of Antigonus Monopthalmus against Petra in 312 BC. His source is Hieronymus of Cardia, who followed the expedition, and he describes a clearly nomadic group:

> ἔχουσι τοίνυν τὸν βίον ὑπαίθριον, πατρίδα καλοῦντες τὴν ἀοίκητον τὴν μήτε ποταμοὺς ἔχουσαν μήτε κρήνας δαψιλεῖς ἐξ ὧν δυνατὸν στρατόπεδον πολέμιον ὑδρεύσασθαι. νόμος δ' ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς μήτε σῖτον σπείρειν μήτε φυτεύειν μηδὲν φυτὸν καρποφόρον μήτε οἴνῳ χρᾶσθαι μήτε οἰκίαν κατασκευάζειν· ὃς δ' ἂν παρὰ ταῦτα ποιῶν εὑρίσκηται, θάνατον αὐτῷ πρόστιμον εἶναι. χρῶνται δὲ τῷ νόμῳ τούτῳ διαλαμβάνοντες τοὺς ταῦτα κτωμένους ἀναγκασθήσεσθαι ῥᾳδίως ὑπὸ τῶν δυνατῶν ἕνεκα τῆς τούτων χρείας ποιεῖν τὸ προστασσόμενον. τρέφουσι δ' αὐτῶν οἱ μὲν καμήλους, οἱ δὲ πρόβατα, τὴν ἔρημον ἐπινέμοντες. οὐκ ὀλίγων δ' ὄντων Ἀραβικῶν ἐθνῶν τῶν τὴν ἔρημον ἐπινεμόντων οὗτοι πολὺ τῶν ἄλλων προέχουσι ταῖς εὐπορίαις, τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὄντες οὐ πολὺ πλείους τῶν μυρίων· εἰώθασι γὰρ αὐτῶν οὐκ ὀλίγοι κατάγειν ἐπὶ θάλασσαν λιβανωτόν τε καὶ σμύρναν καὶ τὰ πολυτελέστατα τῶν ἀρωμάτων, διαδεχόμενοι παρὰ τῶν κομιζόντων ἐκ τῆς Εὐδαίμονος καλουμένης

[93] An exhaustive collection of the literary sources related to the Nabataeans is made in *Quellen* pp. 415–620.

> Ἀραβίας. φιλελεύθεροι δέ εἰσι διαφερόντως καὶ ὅταν πολεμίων δύναμις ἁδρὰ προσίῃ, φεύγουσιν εἰς τὴν ἔρημον, ταύτῃ χρώμενοι ὀχυρώματι· (19.94)
>
> They [the Nabataeans] live in the open air, claiming as native land a wilderness that has neither rivers nor abundant springs from which it is possible for a hostile army to obtain water. It is their custom neither to plant grain, set out any fruit-bearing tree, use wine, nor construct any house; and if anyone is found acting contrary to this, death is his penalty. They follow this custom because they believe that those who possess these things are, in order to retain the use of them, easily compelled by the powerful to do their bidding. Some of them raise camels, others sheep, pasturing them in the desert. While there are many Arabian tribes who use the desert as pasture, the Nabataeans far surpass the others in wealth although they are not much more than ten thousand in number; for not a few of them are accustomed to bring down to the sea frankincense and myrrh and the most valuable kinds of spices, which they procure from those who convey them from what is called Arabia Eudaemon. They are exceptionally fond of freedom; and, whenever a strong force of enemies comes near, they take refuge in the desert, using this as a fortress. (Text and trans. Geer, Loeb).

Half a century after Diodorus, Strabo describes the Nabataeans in rather different terms:

> Σώφρονες δ' εἰσὶν οἱ Ναβαταῖοι καὶ κτητικοί· ὥστε καὶ δημοσίᾳ τῷ μὲν μειώσαντι τὴν οὐσίαν ζημία κεῖται, τῷ δ' αὐξήσαντι τιμαί. ὀλιγόδουλοι δ' ὄντες ὑπὸ τῶν συγγενῶν διακονοῦνται τὸ πλέον ἢ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἢ αὐτοδιάκονοι, ὥστε καὶ μέχρι τῶν βασιλέων διατείνειν τὸ ἔθος. συσσίτια δὲ ποιοῦνται κατὰ τρισκαίδεκα ἀνθρώπους, μουσουργοὶ δὲ δύο τῷ συμποσίῳ ἑκάστῳ. ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ἐν οἴκῳ μεγάλῳ πολλὰ συνέχει συμπόσια· πίνει δ' οὐδεὶς πλέον τῶν ἕνδεκα ποτηρίων ἄλλῳ καὶ ἄλλῳ χρυσῷ ἐκπώματι. οὕτω δ' ὁ βασιλεύς ἐστι δημοτικὸς ὥστε πρὸς τῷ αὐτοδιακόνῳ καὶ ποτ' ἀντιδιάκονον τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ αὐτὸν γίνεσθαι· πολλάκις δὲ καὶ ἐν τῷ δήμῳ δίδωσιν εὐθύνας, ἔσθ' ὅτε καὶ ἐξετάζεται τὰ περὶ τὸν βίον. οἰκήσεις δὲ διὰ λίθου πολυτελεῖς, αἱ δὲ πόλεις ἀτείχιστοι δι' εἰρήνην. εὔκαρπος ἡ πολλὴ πλὴν ἐλαίου (χρῶνται δὲ σησαμίνῳ). πρόβατα λευκότριχα, βόες μεγάλοι· ἵππων ἄφορος ἡ χώρα, κάμηλοι δὲ τὴν ὑπουργίαν ἀντ' ἐκείνων παρέχονται. [. . .] ἰσόκοπρα δ' ἡγοῦνται τὰ νεκρὰ σώματα—καθάπερ Ἡράκλειτός φησι· 'νέκυες κοπρίων ἐκβλητότεροι' —· διὸ καὶ παρὰ τοὺς κοπρῶνας κατορύττουσι καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς. ἥλιον τιμῶσιν ἐπὶ τοῦ δώματος ἱδρυσάμενοι βωμόν, σπένδοντες ἐν αὐτῷ καθ' ἡμέραν καὶ λιβανωτίζοντες. (16.4.26, text Radt).
>
> The Nabataeans are a sensible people, and are so much inclined to acquire possessions that they publicly fine anyone who has diminished his possessions and also confer honours on anyone who has increased them. Since they have but few slaves, they are served by their kinsfolk for the most part, or by one another, or by themselves; so that the custom extends even to their kings. They prepare common meals together in groups of thirteen persons; and they have two girl-singers for each banquet. The king holds many drinking-bouts in magnificent style, but no one drinks more than eleven

> cupfuls, each time using a different golden cup. The king is so democratic that, in addition to serving himself, he sometimes even serves the rest himself in his turn. He often renders an account of his kingship in the popular assembly; and sometimes even his mode of life is examined. Their homes, through the use of stone, are costly; but, on account of peace, the cities are not walled. Most of the country is well supplied with fruits except the olive; they use sesame-oil instead. The sheep are white-fleeced and the oxen are large, but the country produces no horses. Camels afford the service they require instead of horses. [. . .] They have the same regard for the dead as for dung—as Heracleitus says: "Dead bodies are more fit to be cast out than dung"—and therefore they bury even their kings beside dung-heaps. They worship the sun, building an altar on the top of the house, and pouring libations on it daily and burning frankincense. (Trans. Jones).

With stone houses and cities, the Nabataeans are now clearly a settled population. The difference in the accounts is usually explained by their chronological distance, since Diodorus used here the account of Hieronymus of Cardia. It has often been suggested, then, that these two sources demonstrate how, between the end of the fourth century BC and the beginning of the first century AD, the Nabataeans underwent a process of sedentarisation. This must be to some extent true, but the conception of a wholesale 'sedentarisation of the Nabataeans' at any time period is a too simplistic way of explaining social changes in the north-western part of the Arabian Peninsula. The cultural and social diversity that has been emphasised above incorporates a variety of different lifestyles—sedentary, nomadic, semi-nomadic, etc.—and the evidence has not revealed a wholesale switch from one to another.

For us, the most important detail may be Strabo's mention of sun worship with altars on the roofs of houses or buildings.[94] This has most often been explained either as a reference to the prominent position of some cult sites, to the existence of a solar cult in Nabataea, or as a reference to the solar aspect of one of Nabataea's deities, usually Dushara. The first explanation is employed most often in connection with Petra, where we shall see that there are many cult sites in prominent topographical positions. Rather than revealing the cult of a sun god, however, these should be interpreted in light of a long tradition of elevated cult positions in the

[94] Radt (vol. 8, p. 394) points out that δῶμα can be translated as 'roof'. Some temples in Nabataea did have stairways leading to their roof (see, for example, p. 222 below). This is not uncommon in the Near East, however, and does not seem to have any particular connection with the worship of solar deities (see Downey 1976).

Near East.[95] There has also been some attempt to identify cult sites above houses, but this is not particularly convincing.[96] More discussion has been devoted to a possible solar aspect of one of Nabataea's deities. Healey collects the numerous pieces of evidence that have been interpreted as revealing a solar aspect of Dushara.[97] Most of these date well after the kingdom, and Strabo's testimony is the only contemporary piece directly concerned with the Nabataeans. A small amount of iconographical evidence from Petra, perhaps contemporary, has also been interpreted as connected with a sun god, but it is far from unambiguous.[98] If we are to seek confirmation of Strabo's testimony, then, it is not easily forthcoming from our other evidence. It is likely true, as Healey concludes, that some inhabitants of Nabataea may have connected Dushara or another deity with the sun, but Strabo's singling out of this aspect of religious practice in Nabataea does not correlate easily with our other evidence.

There are other remarks that call into question the accuracy of both accounts. Strabo's comment that the Nabataeans "have the same regard for their dead as dung" has attracted particular attention and stands in stark contrast to the magnificence of Petra's tomb facades, and similarly the practice of exposing the corpse does not seem compatible with the archaeological remains.[99] Outside such small problems, however, some more general difficulties have been exposed in using these accounts as a basis for a discussion of Nabataean society. Dijkstra exposes some inconsistencies in Diodorus' account, and suggests that his sources were emphasising different aspects of Nabataean society.[100] At one point, for example, they are engaged in stock-breeding, and at another in trade. This may not be an inaccurate way of describing the undoubtedly heterogeneous groups that lived under Nabataean control. He also emphasises

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[95] See below pp. 68–73.

[96] One example comes from a small massif on the Jebel el-Meisrah in Petra which carries a collection of cultic monuments on its summit. An empty chamber underneath is identified by Nehmé as domestic, and hence perhaps there is here an altar atop a house. There is nothing, however, to confirm that this functioned primarily as a domestic dwelling in the Nabataean period (see below p. 75).

[97] Healey 2001 pp. 102–105.

[98] A relief found during restoration work in 1962 on the Qasr el-bint shows the bust of a deity with a radial crown, but the date of the sculpture is uncertain (see Hübner and Weber 1997 p. 113).

[99] Clermont-Ganneau 1895 suggested that the reference may be explained by the similarity between the Greek word for 'dung' (κόπρος) and one of the Nabataean words for tomb (*kpr'*). Even if this is the root of a confusion, it does not provide us with much confidence as to the carefulness with which Strabo handled his information on the Nabataeans.

[100] Dijkstra 1995 pp. 297–301.

that Hieronymus' account (and so Diodorus') resulted from a military expedition, and therefore that military matters may have coloured his description of the Nabataeans as a whole. Graf is more critical, suggesting that the portrayal of the Nabataeans as freedom-loving nomads may be a literary construct designed to criticise the autocratic Macedonian ruler.[101] He suggests a Herodotean model is being adopted to describe "marginal and peripheral people living on the borders of the civilised world", and concludes that "our perceptions of early Nabataea should be determined more by objective documentary sources, not such stylised literary descriptions as that of Hieronymus of Cardia".[102]

Strabo's account has been subjected to similar scrutiny. In his analysis of the passage, Wenning exposes several apparent mistakes aside from those mentioned above. Strabo is probably basing this part of his account on the experiences of his friend Athenodorus of Tarsus. Wenning concludes that "in general, Athenodorus described more what he believed to see than reality".[103] Anderson has analysed Strabo's portrayal of Nabataea within the context of the *Geography* as a whole.[104] He concludes that, as we have seen with Diodorus, the description of the Nabataeans is modelled to particular literary conventions about uncivilised societies. Their character, he argues, is personified in the figure of Syllaeus, the Nabataean official whom Strabo describes as treacherously leading astray the Arabian expedition of Aelius Gallus in 25 BC. According to Strabo, he had promised to guide Gallus and keep the army well supplied, but deliberately led them away from resources. This version of events does not seem to correlate with the other sources, and must have been affected by Strabo's personal friendship with Gallus. Anderson also demonstrates how, as with Syllaeus, Strabo's depiction of Nabataea also includes a "dark underbelly to the desert kingdom" by blurring the division between the Nabataeans and their uncivilised Arabian neighbours.[105] As such, the Nabataeans are presented as unstable behind their veneer of civilisation and so in need of the order only Rome can bring, which brings them in line with the grand vision of Strabo's work.[106]

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101 Graf 1990 pp. 51–53.
102 *Ibid*. p. 53.
103 Wenning 2007b p. 36.
104 Anderson 2009.
105 *Ibid*. p. 394.
106 On the vision of Strabo, see, for example, Clarke 1999 pp. 325–328.

There are, then, great difficulties with using these two authors as a source of information on Nabataean culture, and they have perhaps sometimes been afforded more weight than they should. It has become apparent that the portrayal of the Nabataeans here may be the result more of literary topoi than historical fact. Any details they provide must therefore be treated with extreme caution, and we should be wary of allowing them to colour our interpretation of other sources. With this in mind, Strabo's comments on Nabataean religious practice, which are largely not reinforced by other sources, should not be taken to form the basis of assumptions about how the Nabataeans worshipped.

There are a handful of comments in later Christian authors that have also often been called upon to improve our understanding of Nabataea's gods or rituals.[107] Epiphanius, writing in the fourth century, includes a description of rituals at Petra in his *Panarion*:

> πρῶτον μὲν ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ ἐν τῷ Κορείῳ οὕτω καλουμένῳ. ναὸς δέ ἐστι μέγιστος τουτέστιν τὸ τέμενος τῆς Κόρης. ὅλην γὰρ τὴν νύκτα ἀγρυπνήσαντες ἐν ᾄσμασί τισι καὶ αὐλοῖς τῷ εἰδώλῳ ᾄδοντες καὶ παννυχίδα διατελέσαντες μετὰ τὴν τῶν ἀλεκτρυόνων κλαγγὴν κατέρχονται λαμπαδηφόροι εἰς σηκόν τινα ὑπόγαιον καὶ ἀναφέρουσι ξόανόν τι ξύλινον ἐν φορείῳ καθεζόμενον γυμνόν, ἔχον σφραγῖδά τινα σταυροῦ ἐπὶ τοῦ μετώπου διάχρυσον καὶ ἐπὶ ταῖς ἑκατέραις χερσὶν ἄλλας δύο τοιαύτας σφραγῖδας καὶ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς τοῖς δυσὶ γονάτοις ἄλλας δύο, ὁμοῦ δὲ [τὰς] πέντε σφραγῖδας ἀπὸ χρυσοῦ τετυπωμένας καὶ περιφέρουσιν αὐτὸ τὸ ξόανον ἑπτάκις κυκλώσαντες τὸν μεσαίτατον ναὸν μετὰ αὐλῶν καὶ τυμπάνων καὶ ὕμνων καὶ κωμάσαντες καταφέρουσιν αὐτὸ αὖθις εἰς τὸν ὑπόγαοιν τόπον. ἐρωτώμενοι δὲ ὅτι τί ἐστι τοῦτο τὸ μυστήριον ἀποκρίνονται καὶ λέγουσιν ὅτι ταύτῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ σήμερον ἡ Κόρη (τουτέστιν ἡ παρθένος) ἐγέννησε τὸν Αἰῶνα.
>
> Τοῦτο δὲ καὶ ἐν Πέτρᾳ τῇ πόλει (μητρόπολις δέ ἐστι τῆς Ἀραβίας, ἥτις ἐστὶν Ἐδὼμ ἡ ἐν ταῖς Γραφαῖς γεγραμμένη) ἐν τῷ ἐκεῖσε εἰδωλείῳ οὕτως γίνεται καὶ Ἀραβικῇ διαλέκτῳ ἐξυμνοῦσι τὴν παρθένον, καλοῦντες αὐτὴν Ἀραβιστὶ Χααμοῦ τουτέστιν Κόρην εἴτ' οὖν παρθένον καὶ τὸν ἐξ αὐτῆς γεγεννημένον Δουσάρην τουτέστιν μονογενῆ τοῦ δεσπότου. . .(51.22.11).

> First, at Alexandria, in the Coreum, as they call it; it is a very large temple, the shrine of Core. They stay up all night singing hymns to the idol with a flute accompaniment. And when they have concluded their nightlong vigil torchbearers descend into an underground shrine after cockcrow and bring up a wooden image which is seated naked <on> a litter. It has a sign of the cross inlaid with gold on its forehead, two other such signs, [one] on each hand, and two other signs, [one] actually [one each of] its two knees—altogether five signs with a gold impress. And they carry the image itself seven times round the innermost shrine with flutes, tambourines and hymns, hold

[107] Some of these are collected in Mordtmann 1876.

> a feast, and take it back down to its place underground. And when you ask them what this mystery means they reply that today at this hour Core—that is, the virgin—gave birth to Aeo.
>
> This also goes on in the city of Petra, in the idolatrous temple there. (Petra is the capital city of Arabia, the scriptural Edom.) They praise the virgin with hymns in the Arab language and call her Chaamu—that is, Core, or virgin—in Arabic. And the child who is born of her they call Dusares, that is, "the only son of the Lord" (Trans. Williams).

The reference has sometimes been taken as evidence of a familial relationship between some of Nabataea's gods. Χααμοῦ, Dushara's mother in this passage, is not explicitly identified as one of Nabataea's better known deities. The word is thought to be connected with Arabic words which can refer to young females or a cube.[108] Starcky suggests that it may have its origins in a reference to Petra's idol blocks or some other rectangular cult apparatus. Healey tentatively puts forward Allat as the best candidate for Dushara's mother, and makes a link to a text from the Hauran that may mention Allat as the "mother of the gods".[109]

To assess the text fully, however, we must look at it in the context of Epiphanius' work. It comes after a long discussion of the date of the Epiphany. He argues that the leaders of the idolatrous cults "are obliged to confess part of the truth" as they deliberately hold great festivals on that day "to deceive the idolaters who believe them into hoping in the imposture and not seeking the truth".[110] He then describes the festival in the Koreion at Alexandria as one such example, which is followed by the description of Petra, and finally we hear that similar rituals are carried out at Elusa on the same night. As Starcky remarks, his purpose is also to show that "les païens eux-mêmes ont admis l'idée de la naissance virginale d'un dieu".[111] Epiphanius, then, is hardly a disinterested observer. His purpose is to find pagan substitutes for the Epiphany and demonstrate that even pagans cannot deny the truth of the virgin birth. For our purposes, we should also emphasise that Epiphanius is writing about three hundred years after the Nabataean period. Even if his description reflects some portion of reality, then, we certainly cannot be sure that these traditions have survived unaltered since then. While cults of Dushara certainly survived well into the Roman period, the social and political changes that

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[108] See Healey 2001 pp. 103–104 and Starcky 1966 col. 992 for an outline of the different etymological theories and their suggestions.

[109] The text is *CIS* II 185.

[110] 51.22.8. Trans. Williams.

[111] Starcky 1966 col. 992.

affected the region in these centuries suggest that they only continued in a much altered form.[112]

Other Christian authors give less specific information which has been brought into the discussion of religion in Nabataea. From at least the beginning of the third century AD, a broad association was made between Dushara and Arabia. Tertullian includes the deity in a list of regional deities in his *Apologeticum*:

> Unicuique etiam provinciae et civitati suus deus est, ut Syriae Atargatis, ut Arabiae Dusares, ut Noricis Belenus, ut Africae Caelestis, ut Mauritaniae Reguli sui. (XXIV. 8).
>
> Every province also and state has its own god; as Syria has Atargatis, Arabia Dusares, the Norici have Belenus, Africa has Caelestis, Mauritania its own Princes. (Trans. Bindley).

His purpose is to demonstrate how all of these provinces follow their own gods, which are not worshipped at Rome, and thus Christians should be allowed to do the same. A similar characterisation is made in his *Ad nationes*, and the connection is again made a century later by Eusebius.[113] Later sources report more traditions attached to the deity. The epitome of Stephanus Byzantius' sixth century *Ethnica* contains an apparently muddled description under the heading Δουσαρή:

> Δουσαρή, σκόπελος καὶ κορυφὴ ὑψηλοτάτη Ἀραβίας. εἴρηται δὲ ἀπὸ Δουσάρου. θεὸς δὲ οὗτος παρὰ Ἄραψιν και Δαχαρηνοῖς τιμώμενος.
>
> Dousarē, viewpoint and very high peak of Arabia. It is so named after Dousares. This god is honoured among the Arabs and the Dacharēnoi.

This may reflect some awareness of Dushara's cult centre amid the mountains of Petra, but it leads us little further in understanding the god. Hesychius, writing in the fifth century, provides a firmer interpretation:

> Δουσάρην· τὸν Διόνυσον. Ναβαταῖοι, ὥς φησι Ἰσίδωρος.
>
> Dousares: Dionysos among the Nabataeans, as says Isidoros.

This is usually taken to refer to Isidore of Charax, a geographer writing in the Augustan period, and so gives another external viewpoint. There is, however, no such unambiguous attestation of this understanding of the god from Nabataea itself. Another scattered series of comments reflect an

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[112] See Alpass (forthcoming).

[113] Tertullian, *Ad nationes* II.8; Eusebius *De laud. Const*. XIII. 5. Both authors also associated the god Obodas with Arabia. This is discussed below pp. 156–159.

awareness of the importance of the worship of aniconic objects among 'the Arabs', but there is little detail beyond this.[114]

One very late source, the tenth-century Byzantine lexicon the *Suda*, gives us more information and has been more regularly included in studies of religion in Nabataea. The entry for 'Theus Ares' gives details of ritual practice at Petra:

> Θεὺς Ἄρης: τουτέστι θεὸς Ἄρης, ἐν Πέτρᾳ τῆς Ἀραβίας. σέβεται δὲ θεὸς Ἄρης παρ' αὐτοῖς: τόνδε γὰρ μάλιστα τιμῶσι. τὸ δὲ ἄγαλμα λίθος ἐστὶ μέλας, τετράγωνος, ἀτύπωτος, ὕψος ποδῶν τεσσάρων, εὖρος δύο: ἀνάκειται δὲ ἐπὶ βάσεως χρυσηλάτου. τούτῳ θύουσι καὶ τὸ αἷμα τῶν ἱερείων προχέουσι: καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν αὐτοῖς ἡ σπονδή. ὁ δὲ οἶκος ἅπας ἐστὶ πολύχρυσος, καὶ ἀναθήματα πολλά.
>
> 'Theus Ares': That is the god Ares, in Petra of Arabia. The god Ares is worshipped among them: for they honour him especially. The statue is a black stone, square in shape, unshaped, four feet tall and two wide: it is mounted on a base of beaten gold. To this they sacrifice and pour the blood of the sacrificial animals, and that is how they make libations. And the whole house is rich in gold, and there are many votive offerings. (Adler 1931 p. 713; also now online at www.stoa.org/sol).

Θεὺς Ἄρης is usually taken as a garbled reference to Dushara, and this gives us apparently accurate information about his cult at Petra. The description of a rectangular idol block standing on a base, a form which is repeated many times throughout Petra's wadis, seems to add veracity to the account. Zayadine considers that it describes the rituals carried out within the Qasr el-Bint, and sees the remains of gold leaf decoration found in the temple as confirming this.[115] It certainly does seem that the *Suda*'s account reflects some awareness of Petra's distinctive cult objects. However, the chronological distance should warn us away from accepting all the details.

Finally, we should turn to the few Islamic sources that describe a polytheistic Arabia. These have sometimes been integrated into studies of the Nabataean period, and appear to give information about the relationships between various gods attested then.[116] This tradition, for example, frequently associates al-'Uzza, Allat and Manat, describing them as the 'daughters of Allah'. Recently, however, Hawting has demonstrated how these sources cannot be used without extreme caution. As with earlier Christian reports, they are part of a monotheistic tradition of thought

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[114] These are collected in Patrich 1990 pp. 50–52.
[115] Zayadine 1985 p. 240. See also below pp. 56–59.
[116] See particularly Wellhausen 1887.

with its own concerns, and any information they might present about pre-Islamic Arabia has been adapted to fit these.[117] One adaptation, for example, is to relate gods and idols to Mecca, and thus to portray them as the background to the Koran and Islam, while the evidence from outside the tradition does not corroborate the connection.[118] Hawting considers there to have been an "overestimation of the extent to which the non-Muslim and Muslim evidence coheres and offers mutual support".[119] More specifically, he remarks that "to use the evidence of, say, the Nabataean inscriptions to illuminate conditions in Mecca at the beginning of the seventh century is to take a step in space and time of which we at least ought to be aware".[120] To do the reverse must be even more perilous.

Sculpture

Where textual evidence is lacking, iconography may give us a clue as to the identity of a deity in a particular cult location or the appearance of the priests. Nabataea stands slightly apart from other areas of the Near East here as, in many parts of the kingdom, there was a preference for aniconic representations of the deities. This phenomenon will be analysed more fully below, but for the moment we should note that the traditional term for these sculptures, 'betyls', will not be used here.[121] The term has a Semitic semantic origin, *byt 'l* meaning 'house of the god', which was widely adopted by Greek writers. Recently, Gaifman has highlighted the inadequacy of the term to describe the wide variety of aniconic sculptures found in Nabataea and elsewhere.[122] Another deficiency is that it assumes the presence of a deity inside the stone, which cannot always be taken to be the case. This may be particularly true in Petra and Hegra, where the large numbers of idol blocks may make us consider that they played more roles than just as representations of a deity. As Gaifman remarks, there is a wide variety in the form and features of the idol blocks found in Nabataea, and it is impossible to associate particular forms with particular deities.

Alongside these aniconic representations, there are a smaller number of anthropomorphic statues of the gods surviving. Traditionally, these have been seen as the result of foreign influences on a Nabataean artistic

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[117] Hawting 1999 pp. 88–110.
[118] *Ibid.* 111–129.
[119] *Ibid.* p. 149.
[120] *Ibid.* p. 129.
[121] See below pp. 83–84.
[122] Gaifman 2008 pp. 53–62.

tradition, and have thus often been dated to the Roman period.[123] There is ample evidence, however, to show that anthropomorphic and aniconic images were incorporated together in rituals, and that the ancient worshippers did not see the incompatibility between these modes of representation that is suggested by some modern commentators.[124] The 'Dushara-Medallion' relief from Petra (fig. 69), where a bust is carved immediately above an idol block, is the most vivid illustration of this. In any case, this debate only seems relevant to Petra and Hegra. Elsewhere, particularly in the Hauran, there is as little firmly datable contemporary evidence for aniconic sculpture as there is for anthropomorphic.

There were, then, certainly anthropomorphic religious sculptures being produced in many parts of Nabataea, and these should not be dismissed as somehow peripheral to Nabataea's cults. Like the aniconic sculptures, however, extracting concrete information as to the identity of the deities they represent is very problematic unless they are explicitly identified. Two examples can illustrate this. A statue of an enthroned goddess in the Wadi Siyyagh of Petra is identified as Isis by an accompanying inscription.[125] The goddess is not explicitly identified anywhere else in Nabataea, and the statue does not closely resemble her iconography in the wider Graeco-Roman world. Two scholars who have investigated the site in detail have therefore remarked that "without the inscription no one would have identified her as Isis".[126] Even the most basic understanding of the iconography, then, would have been unavailable without the inscription. The second example is the cult statues of Khirbet Tannur, where an enthroned god and goddess are seated together but not identified by any inscription.[127] As some aspects of their iconography are paralleled elsewhere in the Near East, attempts have been made to identify them here by drawing on a multitude of cult statues that are chronologically or geographically far removed from Nabataea. This has resulted in some complicated divine identities being proposed, one scholar labelling them as 'Zeus-Hadad-Jupiter' and 'Atargatis-Aphrodite'.[128] It seems probable that the ancient worshippers did not understand them in this way. The difficulty is that there are very few examples of explicitly identified cult

[123] See, for example, Patrich 1990 and Mettinger 1995, who both consider that there was an injunction against graven images among the Nabataeans.
[124] See Alpass 2010 pp. 107–109.
[125] See also below p. 89, no. 2.
[126] Merklein and Wenning 2001 p. 426.
[127] See also below pp. 218–220.
[128] Glueck 1965.

statues from Nabataea, and so very meagre resources for comparison with unidentified statues. Parallels are inevitably sought outside the kingdom, and there is a constant danger of contaminating the religious landscape with ideas for which there is no direct evidence. The example of Isis demonstrates how dangerous this might be. The iconography of the goddess here is unique, and comparison with other statues in the Near East would have led us away from her identity.

More plentiful, but less significant for our purposes, is architectural decoration. Here, more success has been made in establishing connections outside Nabataea. It is clear, for example, that much of Petra's architecture and architectural decoration is closely paralleled by material from Alexandria.[129] Similarly, sculpture from the Nabataean-controlled Hauran displays aspects of a style common to the Hauran as a whole and other neighbouring areas, but not to the other regions of Nabataea.[130] In this way, sculpture may be reflective of cultural connections or unities that might otherwise escape us, and this should be taken into account in our analysis of the religious evidence.

Archaeological Remains

Like many of Nabataea's sculptures, the remains of its temples and other religious structures are only occasionally illuminated by inscriptions. However, the physical surroundings of worship do allow us certain insights into cult practices. This is particularly true of Petra and Hegra, where thousands of religious monuments survive carved into the rock. Their number and variety allows us to reconstruct the different groups in which worshippers gathered at a level of detail that is not possible elsewhere. Similarly, a glimpse is occasionally provided into cult practices. The numerous basins found in a cultic context at Petra, for example, reveal the importance of water and purification to ritual practices.

When considering built monuments, however, the evidence is less plentiful and less accessible, and its interpretation sometimes more problematic. The layout of Nabataea's temples has so far thwarted any attempt to find a model into which they can all be neatly fitted. A common element to many was a cult podium where presumably the most important idol blocks would have stood, but this was integrated within a variety

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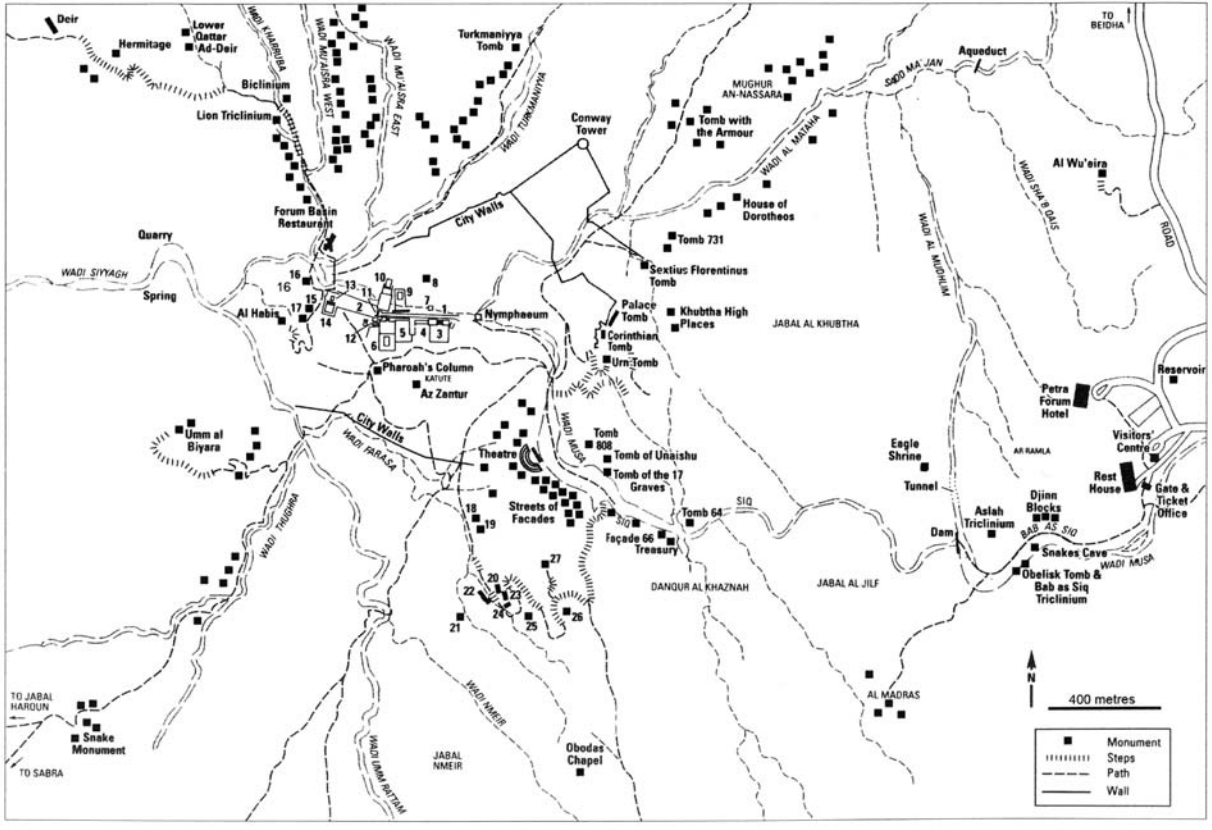
[129] See McKenzie 2005.
[130] See below pp. 170–172.

of frameworks.[131] Identifying a temple, then, is not always a simple matter. The best example of this is the so-called 'Great Temple' in the town centre of Petra.[132] Although this has been excavated in regular campaigns for nearly twenty years, there remain fundamental disagreements as to whether it was primarily a religious building or not. Nevertheless, an ever increasing number of excavations continue to provide more and more detailed and accurate reconstructions of Nabataea's temples. We shall see that, where all other evidence is lacking, the physical surroundings are able to provide some insight into the rituals carried out inside.

[131] See Tholbecq 1997; 2007 pp. 115–124.
[132] See below pp. 59–62.



Map of Petra. 1. Colonnaded Street; 2. Temenos; 3. "Upper Market;" 4. "Middle Market;" 5. "Lower Market;" 6. Great Temple; 7. Byzantine Tower; 8. Byzantine Church; 9. "Royal Palace;" 10. Temple of the Winged Lions; 11. Temenos Gate; 12. Baths; 13. Altar; 14. Qasr al-Bint; 15. Unfinished Tomb; 16. Museum; 17. "Columbarium;" 18. Tomb of the Broken Pediment; 19. Tomb 229; 20. Triclinium; 21. Tomb 258; 22. Roman Soldier Tomb; 23. Medallion and Block Relief; 24. Garden Temple; 25. Lion Fountain; 26. "Obelisks;" 27. High Place.

Map 2. Petra (Schmid 2008b fig. 12.7).

CHAPTER TWO

PETRA'S SACRED SPACES: GODS AND WORSHIPPERS

Since its re-discovery at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Petra has continued to capture the imagination of visitors and scholars alike. Very little mention of the site, however, can be found in the ancient sources. We have seen that Diodorus Siculus and Strabo present some details of Petra's geography and society, but also that there are serious difficulties with using these accounts.[1] Petra certainly appears several times outside these, but the authors can give little detail about the city, and that is not their main concern in any case. In his description of Arabia, for example, Pliny the Elder informs us that Petra lies within a valley surrounded by inaccessible mountains, and Agatharchides of Knidos tells us of its role as a hub of trade in his description of the eastern side of the Red Sea.[2] The city also appears several times as the distant capital of the Nabataeans and the residence of their king, but does not merit a description itself.[3] The same is true for those sources which preserve the Semitic name of the town, Reqem. Josephus provides the identification of the two names during his recounting of the Israelites' attack against the Midianites, and the many enemy kings who fell:

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[1] See above pp. 23–28.

[2] Pliny *HN* 6.144: Deinde Nabataei oppidum incolunt Petram nomine in convalle, paulo minus II p. amplitudinis, circumdatum montibus inaccessis, amne interfluente.

"Next are the Nabataeans inhabiting a town named Petra; it lies in a deep valley a little less than two miles wide, and is surrounded by inaccessible mountains with a river flowing between them." (text and trans. Rackham, Loeb).

Agatharchides *De mari Erythraeo* 5.89a: Αὕτη δὲ ἡ Νῆσσα κεῖται μὲν ἐγγὺς ἀκρωτηρίου καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὑλώδους, διατείνει δὲ ἐπ' εὐθείας θεωρουμένη πρός τε τὴν Πέτραν καλουμένην καὶ τὴν Παλαιστίνην, εἰς ἣν Γερραῖοι καὶ Μιναῖοι καὶ πάντες οἱ πλησίον ἔχοντες τὰς οἰκήσεις Ἄραβες τόν τε λιβανωτόν, ὡς λόγος, καὶ τὰ φορτία τὰ πρὸς εὐωδίαν ἀνήκοντα ἀπὸ τῆς χώρας τῆς ἄνω κατάγουσιν.

"Nessa itself lies near a very thickly wooded promontory. If one sights along a straight line drawn through it, the line would extend to Petra and Palestine, to which the Gerrhaeans, Minaeans and all the Arabs, whose settlements are nearby, bring down frankincense, as is the report, together with cargoes of incense from the upper country." (trans. Burstein).

See *Quellen* pp. 568–570 and pp. 415–416 respectively.

[3] Particularly, for example, during the conflicts between Nabataea and the Jewish state that are reported in Josephus: *AJ* 14.16, 14.80, 17.54, 17.286, 18.109; *BJ* 1.125, 1.159, 1.575.

> πέντε δὲ ἦσαν, Ὦχός τε καὶ Σούρης ἔτι δὲ Ῥοβέης καὶ Οὔρης, πέμπτος δὲ Ῥέκεμος, οὗ πόλις ἐπώνυμος τὸ πᾶν ἀξίωμα τῆς Ἀράβων ἔχουσα γῆς καὶ μέχρι νῦν ὑπὸ παντὸς τοῦ Ἀραβίου τοῦ κτίσαντος βασιλέως τὸ ὄνομα Ῥεκέμης καλεῖται, Πέτρα παρ' Ἕλλησι λεγομένη (*AJ* 4.161).
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> Of these there were five: Ochus and Sures, Robees and Ures, and, the fifth, Rekem; the city which bears his name ranks highest in the land of the Arabs and to this day is called by the whole Arabian nation, after the name of its royal founder, Rekeme: it is the Petra of the Greeks. (text and trans. Thackeray, Loeb).

The same link may also be made in the story of Aaron's death, which has ensured that the site of Petra has maintained a religious significance until the present day. Josephus records how the Israelites reached a town which the Arabians consider their metropolis, once called 'Arke' but now known as Petra. Aaron then proceeded up a nearby mountain, removed his priestly garments, and died.[4] The modest shrine on top of the Jebel Harun marks the spot today. Starcky suggests that 'Arke' (Αρκην) could be a scribal error for Reqem (Αρκεμ), the copyist having in mind the Arkites of *Gen.* 10:17.[5] Reqem appears a number of times in the post-biblical Jewish and Christian traditions, and an inscription from Petra suggests that this is how the Nabataeans may have named their town.[6] Again, however, none of these sources provide any detailed information for the Nabataean period.

While little information can be gained from the literary sources, then, the archaeological and epigraphic evidence reveals a site where settled occupation probably began at some point in the early Hellenistic period, and continued at least until the sixth or seventh century AD. A series of roughly built constructions uncovered alongside the colonnaded street in the town centre during the 1960s were originally dated by Peter Parr to the third century BC, but this has been modified recently.[7] Scattered finds of pottery and coins, however, continue to suggest a human settlement at

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[4] *AJ* 4.82: (πρότερον μὲν Ἀρκην λεγομένην Πέτραν δὲ νῦν ὀνομαζομένην).The biblical version of Aaron's death can be found at *Numbers* 20:23–29, but there it is located at Mount Hor.

[5] Starcky 1966 col. 896.

[6] See *ibid.* col. 886–900 for a full discussion of the name of Petra in the biblical and post-biblical sources. The inscription is a funerary text from the entrance of the Siq. It mentions a certain Petraios, who died at Gerasa, but had visited Petra (*rqmw*) (Starcky 1965 pp. 44–46).

[7] For the original dating see Parr 1965 p. 528; Parr 1970 pp. 369–370. This was based on the discovery of coins dated to the third century BC. These were, however, found in a secondary context, and in any case could have remained in circulation for a long time after their minting. See now Parr 2007 p. 278.

the site during the Hellenistic period, and more recent excavations seem to have confirmed this.[8] It was later, during the first centuries BC and AD, that Petra developed its monumental town centre under the patronage of the Nabataean kings. Some monumental building continued after the annexation, but Petra progressively began to lose out to more northerly cities during the Roman period, and its grandeur was particularly diminished by a powerful earthquake in AD 363. The latest testimony comes from the sixth century Petra Papyri discovered during the excavations of the Petra Church. These are mainly legal documents pertaining to the property and affairs of a particular local family, and unfortunately contain little information about the condition of the city as a whole. Similarly, very little sign of Byzantine Petra survives in the archaeological record, and it seems that by this stage settlement would have been concentrated around the churches of the north ridge. No mention of Petra survives in accounts of the Muslim conquest, and by the eighth century AD the functioning of the site as any kind of urban centre seems to have ceased.[9] The ruins of crusader forts and scattered references in the Islamic sources are all that survive of Petra from the following centuries.[10]

The story of Petra's rediscovery by the Swiss explorer Johann Ludwig Burckhardt is well known, and the early European visitors to the site have recently attracted considerable scholarly interest.[11] Burckhardt had already spent three years living in Syria, perfecting his Arabic and learning the local customs, before attempting the dangerous trip. He pretended that he had taken a vow to sacrifice a goat in honour of Aaron, and so was taken by a guide through the Siq and to the Jebel Harun. His brief reports inspired a number of successors, and the splendid drawings and paintings they returned with quickly cemented Petra's place in the western

[8] See Graf 2007b. These excavations, next to those of Parr, managed to reach strata beneath the phase Parr dates to c. 100 BC. Carbon dating of a layer of charcoal seems to have confirmed a phase of occupation in the early Hellenistic period, if not before.

[9] For the urban development of Petra in the Roman and Byzantine periods, see in general Parr 2007. For the Petra Church see Fiema *et al.* 2001 and Fiema 2003. Most of the Petra Papyri have been published in Frösén *et al.* 2002 and Arjava *et al.* 2007. Their information on the society of Petra during the Byzantine period is examined in Koenen 2003, Frösén 2004, Caldwell and Gagos 2007 and Cotton 2009.

[10] For this period see Nehmé and Villeneuve 1999 pp. 39–43. It seems that the easily defensible positions at Petra made it a suitable location for the crusaders, who built three small fortresses here. It formed part of a line of castles running northwards from Aqaba along the King's Highway defending the western parts of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

[11] See Lindner 1989a; Stucky and Lewis 1997; Lewis 2003, 2007 and 2008; Llewellyn 2003.

imagination. More serious scholarly investigation began at the end of the nineteenth century with the visits of Alois Musil, who devoted much of his *Arabia Petraea* to a study of Petra's monuments.[12] At about the same time, from 1897–98, Brünnow and Domaszewski visited the site and produced a catalogue of 851 monuments from Petra as part of their survey of Provincia Arabia. They were particularly interested in the tomb facades, and were the first to organise them into a typology and attempt to construct a chronology.[13] In the first decade of the twentieth century, the site was visited several times by Gustaf Dalman, who made a survey of Petra's rock-cut sanctuaries, and whose findings were published in two volumes.[14] The surveys of Brünnow and Domaszewski and Dalman remain fundamental to any study of Petra, and the catalogue numbers they ascribed to the monuments remain the system of reference used today.[15]

Excavations began at Petra in 1929, with the British archaeologist George Horsfield investigating the walls to the north and south of the town centre.[16] An ever increasing number of European, American and Jordanian excavations gradually began to reveal more and more of Petra's urban fabric throughout the twentieth century.[17] The monumental town centre with its large sanctuaries and the surrounding domestic residences particularly came into clearer focus. Meanwhile, the clearing and restoration of the rock-cut monuments was undertaken in earnest as the Jordanian authorities began to develop plans for the management and preservation of their most important historic site.[18] The exploration of the wadis and numerous satellite settlements surrounding the town centre also continued, with it soon becoming clear that Petra was by no means

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[12] Musil 1907–1908.

[13] See Brünnow and Domaszewski 1904 pp. 125–428 for their catalogue of the monuments of Petra. Domaszewski's analysis of the tomb types and their chronology can be found on pp. 137–191. McKenzie provides a review of this and other subsequent chronologies developed for Petra's tombs (McKenzie 2005 pp. 2–4).

[14] Dalman 1908 and 1912.

[15] A new catalogue and map of Petra's rock-cut monuments, however, is badly needed. Countless new discoveries have been made since the early surveys, and these often only took into account the most prominent monuments. During surveys from 1988–1995, Laïla Nehmé compiled a new catalogue of about three thousand monuments, roughly a third of which are unpublished. Brief glimpses of this have appeared in print (e.g. Nehmé 2003a pp. 152–157), but the project remains unpublished.

[16] Horsfield 1938, 1939 and 1942.

[17] For a history of the excavations and major discoveries at Petra see Parr 1990. The website of the Petra National Trust also provides details of all the scholarly projects undertaken at the site (www.petranationaltrust.org).

[18] See Aslan 2007.

isolated in antiquity.[19] A number of detailed typological studies were also devoted to the rock-cut monuments.[20] Today, a number of archaeological teams continue to investigate the town centre and further afield, and there is still enormous potential for future discoveries to advance our understanding of the city.[21]

The magnificence of Petra's rock-cut monuments has inevitably overshadowed the architectural remains, and only gradually and with more excavation has a more balanced picture of the city emerged. Early visitors based their characterisations of the site primarily on the hundreds of rock-cut tombs and sanctuaries. This was clearly a unique site that required special explanation. A picture was formed of Petra as a city of the dead or a Nabataean national shrine, and this persisted through much of the twentieth century.[22] It was challenged, however, by the increasing amount of attention being given to domestic dwellings. Some attention had been given to rock-cut dwellings by the early excavators, but it was not until much more recently that Petra's free-standing houses were brought to light.[23] Excavations in the ez-Zantur area just south of the town centre revealed a variety of buildings dating from the Nabataean period in what seems to have been a domestic quarter, including a large mansion.[24] Another large domestic residence had already been partially uncovered by

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[19] The prodigious work of Manfred Lindner and his teams sponsored by the Naturhistorische Gesellschaft Nürnberg must be acknowledged here. See most importantly Lindner 1986, 1989b and 2003.

[20] Two unpublished French doctoral dissertations from the University of Paris, for example, have been devoted to Petra's idol niches and triclinia (see Roche 1980 and Tarrier 1980 for brief reports on their work). Judith McKenzie has provided an updated treatment of the tomb facades (McKenzie 2005), and Lucy Wadeson has just finished her analysis of the tomb interiors (see Wadeson 2010).

[21] For a full listing of projects currently underway in Petra, visit www.petranationaltrust.org.

[22] See, for example, Negev 1977 pp. 590–591: "Thus rather than being a city in the normal sense, it would seem that Petra was more in the nature of a national shrine, housing a central national necropolis and institutions connected with it, to which people from all over Edom, Moab and beyond were brought to burial. It also housed the central national temple. The people probably did not live in Petra itself, but rather in Gaia . . ."

[23] For an overview of the domestic architecture of Petra, see Kolb 2007. The Horsfields had investigated a number of rock-cut dwellings in the Wadi Siyyagh and on the eastern side of the el-Habis (Horsfield 1938). More recently, Nehmé has counted 550 domestic rock-cut chambers as part of her survey of Petra, classified as such "either because they do not contain any particular installation or because they contain cupboard like structures" (Nehmé 2003a p. 158).

[24] The excavation reports are Bignasca *et al.* 1996, Schmid and Kolb 2000 and Keller and Grawehr 2006. Overviews can be found in Kolb 2003 and 2007.

a Jordanian team on el-Katuthe in 1981.[25] The ongoing excavations in the Wadi Farasa have exposed a palatial complex encompassing also rock-cut tombs, and it now seems that many of Petra's large tombs were associated with such complexes.[26] As more and more evidence for the living population of Petra came to light, the picture of Petra solely as a national necropolis could not be maintained. Recently, however, Kühn has argued that the old theories should not be abandoned entirely.[27] Petra, it is argued, as the dwelling place of Dushara and a cultic centre would have become an attractive place for burial, and nomadic clans visiting the site at festivals could honour their dead at the same time.

Clearly neither aspect of the city's function should be overlooked. The tombs unfortunately tell us little about their occupants, only that the size and position of the façade probably had some correlation with expense and therefore status.[28] We do not know whether they were citizens of Petra or outsiders. We do have some indication, on the other hand, that Petra held some kind of religious significance for other parts of Nabataea. A number of texts from the kingdom associate Dushara with a place called al-Gaia.[29] While this is usually taken to refer to the site of the modern town of Wadi Musa, rather than the ancient city centre itself, it shows that the area had a particular importance to at least some of the cults of Dushara in other parts of Nabataea.[30] Knauf has also drawn together some evidence that may show Petra as a destination for pilgrimage.[31] Most explicit is a Greek inscription, probably from the second or third century AD, found in the legionary camp at Udruh just east of Petra.[32] Knauf suggests that it could be the work of a Nabataean family coming to pay homage to Dushara, who decided to thank the gods for their safe passage at this point.[33] It seems more likely, however, that the author was

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[25] Khairy 1990.

[26] See below p. 80.

[27] Kühn 2005 pp. 35–37.

[28] This aspect of tomb design is analysed particularly in Negev 1976a and Balty 1983.

[29] See below text no. 16, l. 2–3, p. 102.

[30] See Starcky 1966 for a full discussion of al-Gaia. 'El-Ji' seems to have been an early name for Wadi Musa, and Eusebius identifies Γαι as a town near Petra in his *Onomasticon*.

[31] Knauf 1998.

[32] *IGLS* XXI: IV 128: Θεοῖς τοῖς καταγομένοις ἐξ γαίης ἀλλοδαπῆς ἔνθα εἰς Πέτραν [. . .]μιος εὐχαριστῶν σὺν ἰδίοις.

"To the gods who brought me safely from a foreign land here to Petra, . . . mios, being thankful, at his own expense".

[33] Knauf 1998 pp. 94–95.

a soldier.[34] More certain are a series of inscriptions from the Siq from about the same period, which seem to show that Petra had a wider religious importance at this time.[35] These were made by the Panegyriarchs of Adraa, where there was a cult of Dousares in the Roman period.[36] One of the idol blocks accompanying them takes the same peculiar form as that shown on Adraa's coinage, where it is named as Dousares. It seems, therefore, that Petra was considered particularly important to the deity, at least in the Roman period. Knauf also draws our attention to two pieces of iconographical evidence that may reveal Petra as a centre for pilgrimage. Two large reliefs on the southern wall of the Siq show two pairs of camels and their leaders. Many of the sculpture's details have been lost to erosion, but Knauf suggests that a sharp line that does survive may be the edge of an idol block being carried on one of the camels' backs, and that the other three may have carried a similar load as part of a religious procession.[37] A more recent analysis, however, has not supported this conclusion, and sees differently shaped loads on each camel as part of a trade caravan. As such the reliefs are seen as a monument to the incense trade.[38] Similar uncertainty surrounds another sculpture on the wall of a small burial chamber near the Obelisk Tomb, before the entrance to the Siq (D 47d.e.) (fig. 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). Part of this shows a horse or a mule carrying a rectangular object on its back. Dalman suggested that we may have the anthropomorphic image of a deity here, but Knauf prefers to see

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[34] This is the conclusion of *IGLS*. The personal name ending in –mius is not typical of Nabataea. Given the proximity of the legionary camp, the author seems most likely to be a foreign soldier.

[35] *IGLS* XXI: IV 9–16.

[36] For a discussion of Dousares at Adraa in the Roman period, see below pp. 196–198.

[37] Knauf 1998 p. 96.

[38] Ruben 2003 pp. 40–43. It is also argued that movable idol blocks would have been smaller than required transport by a camel, as is suggested by the size of the sockets that survive in some niches. A religious element, however, is not ruled out: "Such a representation could have a religious component if the trade goods being carried were votive offerings to various deities" (p. 43). We should also note the camel relief on the Deir plateau (D 464). This is also badly eroded, but seems to show two men either side of an altar in an act of offering, with a pair of camels surrounding them. Further afield, reliefs from the Temples of Bel and Allat at Palmyra show camels as part of a religious procession (see Dirven 1999 pp. 81–86). The camels carry small tents, and it is possible that they were used to carry sacred objects as part of processions. The camels in Petra, however, are too eroded to detect a tent. Furthermore, the scenes from Palmyra also show a series of veiled attendants clearly in a procession, whereas there are only two attendants at Petra and they are clearly not in procession.

an idol block in the context of a pilgrimage.[39] The iconography is unfortunately uncertain, and we also have no way of dating these sculptures; like the inscriptions they could be the product of the Roman period. There is, however, no need to be too sceptical. Petra clearly attracted worshippers from other parts of Arabia in the second and third centuries AD, and it seems likely that, as home of "the god of Gaia" during the kingdom, these patterns had been established for some time.

Petra, then, appears to have held a special place in the religious landscape of Nabataea. The sources for its cults and deities are likewise more numerous than anywhere else in the kingdom, but they are unevenly balanced and sometimes frustratingly ambiguous. We have seen that the literary sources provide little information and have often been used too uncritically. It is the inscriptions that prove most useful. Over a thousand texts have been collected from the site.[40] The vast majority are in Nabataean, but Greek, Latin and the Ancient North Arabian dialects are also represented. Very few of these, however, give anything more than a name with a brief ancestry. Nehmé notes, for example, that 89.5% of the Nabataean inscriptions are made up of signatures.[41] As has often been noted, Petra's sandstone is not an easy material in which to carve texts, and lengthy inscriptions of any kind are relatively rare. The swift rate of erosion also means that many of these are in a poor condition or will not have survived at all. Nevertheless, those inscriptions that do remain are essential to our interpretation of Petra's most numerous religious monuments: the hundreds of rock-cut niches and idol blocks that line the wadis leading to the town centre. They have revealed, for example, that these were not all representations of Dushara, as was once assumed, but could

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[39] Dalman 1908 p. 74 makes a link with Alexandrian coins showing a mounted Ἥλιος Σάραπις, and suggests we may have here the representation of a "Duschara-Helios". Close examination of the relief could not resolve whether it was intended to show a rider or another object. The bridlery around the animal's head is carved in some detail, but there is no detail on the rectangular object carried on its back to indicate a human figure. Dalman's drawing is perhaps too suggestive of this. On the other hand, what could be a leg is carved very lightly down the animal's flank. The rest of the relief is equally mysterious. It seems likely that the long thin carvings are intended to represent snakes, as we have snakes elsewhere in tombs from Petra (e.g. the 'Snake Tomb' and D210d). They were probably employed in an apotropaic sense to watch over the dead.

[40] For an overview of the inscriptions of Petra, see Nehmé 1997b. The figures are provided on pp. 125–126. A new corpus of Nabataean texts from Petra was being prepared by Milik and Starcky after epigraphic surveys conducted from 1955–1974. A number of the more important texts have appeared in articles (e.g. Milik and Starcky 1975 and Milik 1980), but the corpus remains unpublished.

[41] Nehmé 1997b p. 127.

show a variety of deities. Only very few of the blocks, however, are accompanied by a text, and attempts to understand them through their size or form have so far proved unsuccessful.[42] The majority stand frustratingly silent, and we have little idea of who was being worshipped in any particular case. On the other hand, the sheer number of these monuments is Petra's greatest asset. Alongside the archaeological investigation of the city's temples, they allow us to reconstruct the physical context of worship in numerous locations and give suggestions as to what kind of rituals might have been conducted. It is by focussing on this aspect that we may extract the most reliable information on Petra's religious life. The slender evidence makes conclusions as to the nature of Petra's deities often very tenuous, but we are on firmer ground when considering in what groups and with what rituals these gods were worshipped.

Approaches

The Petra Archaeological Park covers about one hundred square miles, and the material is not evenly distributed throughout. The town centre lies in a broad valley, about a kilometre wide, hemmed in on its eastern and western sides by rocky mountains (map 2). A number of deep wadis radiate outwards from the central valley, forming natural routes of communication for Petra's inhabitants. It is along these, and on top of the peaks immediately surrounding the town centre, where the rock-cut monuments are concentrated. Along with the free-standing structures, there are roughly three thousand monuments to be found in the town centre and surrounding areas. This is, however, only part of the picture. A number of smaller settlements, often with similar types of religious monument, existed nearby along the routes that led towards the city proper. These may have been fairly substantial settlements in their own right, as for example Sabra to the south or el-Beidha to the north. Sabra, 7.5 km south of Petra, had its own theatre, temple, acropolis and houses, and the number of water supply systems nearby hint at a sizable population.[43] El-Beidha, a similar distance to the north of the town centre, is now famous for the wall-paintings that still survive in some of its rock-cut chambers. As at Sabra, a number of dwellings and large cisterns attest to a

[42] See Alpass 2010 pp. 109–112.

[43] For a description of Sabra see Lindner *et al.* 1997–98, and for its water supply strategy see Lindner 2005.

local population, and there is evidence for monumental building.[44] These are two of the largest and best known of Petra's satellite settlements, but there are a number of others and these sometimes contain important religious monuments.[45]

It will not be possible here, then, to analyse every monument from the Petra area. We can only include a representational selection of these, and how to organise the material in such a way as to produce an accurate overview of Petra's religious patterns is problematic. Proceeding area by area, focussing for example on the Siq, then the town centre, and then the Ḥubta massif, may present parts of the same system as artificially disconnected. One much broader division, between the architectural town centre and the rock-cut wadis, often seems to exist unspoken in current analyses. There is a sense that the rock-cut monuments represent an older, more definitively 'Nabataean' layer of practices and beliefs, while the temples in the town centre are the result of newer, more Hellenised traditions. This must partly be a consequence of their nature: built temples can more easily find parallels in the wider Near East, whereas rock-cut monuments are far rarer. It is also a consequence of the lingering characterisation of the Nabataeans as nomads: monumental building is culturally alien to this group, and so must be the result of foreign influence. There is, however, no evidence that Petra's landscape would have been understood in this way by the city's inhabitants in the Nabataean period. Firstly, our chronological evidence is simply not strong enough to show a progression from rock-cut monuments to free-standing structures, or vice versa.[46] Secondly, the numerous pathways that survive chiselled into mountains around the town centre attest to the interconnected nature of Petra's sacred spaces. These are often lined with niches and idol blocks, and were most probably followed by religious processions moving from the town centre into the mountains, or vice versa. The town centre, the wadis and the

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[44] For descriptions of el-Beidha see Bikai *et al.* 2007 and 2008.

[45] One such example is the "Pond Temple" at a site called Slaysil to the north-west of Petra. This is a series of large structures near a pond, perhaps at the crossroads of caravan routes. A considerable number of large architectural pieces testify to the size and importance of the main structure, the rough outline of which has been established, but the site has not yielded any inscriptions and there has as yet been no archaeological investigation (see Lindner and Gunsam 1995).

[46] The earliest dated rock-cut monument is the Aṣlaḥ Triclinium (no. 1, p. 88 below), from the beginning of the first century BC, and the latest is a text from AD 256 associated with a number of idol blocks carved by the Panegyriarchs of Adraa in the Siq (*IGLS* XXI: IV 18). Monumental building in the town centre is also thought to have begun in the first century BC (p. 51–53 below).

surrounding mountaintops would have been experienced by worshippers as part of the same rituals, and treating them as separate, or more dangerously as the product of separate religious traditions, risks misrepresenting the situation.

Another way of organising the material would be to divide it by type, analysing first the temples, then the niches, then the idol blocks, and so on. Such typological studies have certainly advanced our understanding of Petra's monuments, most notably with regard to the tombs. The danger here, however, is that by removing the monuments from their context we lose the opportunity of building up a picture of how they were employed together in rituals. Another way of dividing the material, based on the worshippers rather than the monuments, has emerged from Nehmé's study of Petra's sacred spaces. She divides this into three categories, based on the different groups in which worshippers gathered: public and collective, private and collective, and private and individual.[47] Public sacred spaces are defined as structures or areas that would have probably required the involvement of municipal, royal or clan authorities to complete and manage, such as the temples of the city centre or the surrounding high-places. Private and collective sacred spaces are the responsibility of smaller groups who are drawn together by one of three factors: living in the same area, worshipping the same divinity or belonging to the same social group. Finally, private and individual sacred spaces account for the many isolated monuments that seem to have been the responsibility of particular individuals. As will become clear through this study, these categories are hard to define precisely and sometimes cannot be clearly demarcated in the remains. The division between public and private space is particularly difficult to qualify in certain spaces, and it is also clear that some could be used in different ways by different groups. The Siq, for example, is often described as a processional way that would have held large public processions moving to or from the temples in the town centre, but the monuments on its walls are the result of much smaller private initiatives. It will not be possible, then, to allocate every monument to a particular kind of sacred space, but organising the material around the worshippers must be the most productive way of trying to reconstruct their religious experiences. By progressing through these different types of worship, we also have the best opportunity of producing a selection of monuments which

[47] For more details, see Nehmé 1997a pp. 1046–1048.

are broadly representational of Petra's religious landscape while including the detail required to analyse them properly.

The bulk of this chapter will therefore be focussed on Petra's worshippers, and what the monuments and inscriptions can tell us about their religious practices. However, we will also provide a catalogue of the significant religious inscriptions and the gods explicitly identified in Petra, which follows this chapter as an appendix. The number and amount of detail contained in these surpasses any other Nabataean site, and they are often relevant to more than one aspect of its religious life. It will therefore be preferable to collect them in a catalogue, where the issues of reading and language can be examined, and to refer to them during the analysis where their full context and significance can be discussed. In other chapters, where there is much less epigraphic material, inscriptions will be included at the relevant point in the text. Cataloguing Petra's inscriptions here will also allow us to firstly make some important points about the city's deities, who are usually the focus of studies of Petra's religious life, before moving on to a fuller analysis of Petra's different groups and patterns of worship.

Gods

With Petra's inscriptions collected together in the appendix, we can comment on some of the broader ideas to have been advanced concerning Petra's gods in the Nabataean period; the association of particular deities to particular sanctuaries or temples will be discussed later. Firstly, we should emphasise the lack of chronological information available.[48] The earliest surviving mention of a deity is certainly Dushara (text no. 1, p. 88, below: 96 or c. 62 BC), and this is probably followed by a mention of Isis (no. 2 below: 26/25 BC). By the early first century AD, Baalshamin (no. 4) and Obodat (no. 5) can be added to the list, and towards the end of that century 'the idol block of Boṣra' (no. 8) and Ṣabu (no. 7). In the meantime, al-Uzza (nos 17 and 18), Atargatis (nos 22 and 23) and Kutba (no. 20) make their appearance. It is very difficult, however, to accurately track the introduction of deities to the city, especially as we must only have small fragments of the original picture surviving.

[48] See also the useful table in Nehmé 1997a p. 1043.

Some of these deities have been identified by scholars as being 'foreign' introductions to the city, particularly Atargatis, Isis and Baalshamin.[49] Their labelling in this manner has much to do with the scholarly construction of a 'Nabataean religion', where certain deities can therefore be designated as outsiders, and not necessarily with how they would have been perceived by worshippers. Concentrating on the evidence from Petra, it seems there is only justification for viewing Atargatis in this way. She is explicitly linked with her cult centre at Hierapolis (no. 23), and so placed outside the city. Isis is considered foreign both because she appears only here in Nabataea (no. 2), and also because she is accompanied by a very unusual anthropomorphic representation. She is, however, the second earliest attested deity at Petra, after Dushara, and her statue would not have necessarily set her so far apart in the minds of Petra's worshippers.[50] As for Baalshamin, he is so widely attested in the northerly parts of Nabataea and beyond that his one appearance at Petra (4) has led to his being classified as foreign here. The text, however, seems to associate him strongly with the royal family, and we should not forget that Baalshamin was also worshipped in the southern parts of the kingdom.[51] That Isis and Baalshamin, then, were somehow viewed as 'foreign' by Petra's worshippers cannot be supported by the evidence. In general, any attempt to label Petra's deities as 'foreign' or 'indigenous' is badly affected by the lack of chronological evidence. We simply cannot trace when particular gods were introduced to the site. As with many other areas of the Near East, our evidence appears suddenly in the first centuries BC/AD, and probably reflects a situation that has been developing for some centuries. Picking apart its individual threads and assigning them to a particular cultural background may enable us to hint at their distant origins, but it is more likely to introduce labels and conceptions that were not shared by contemporary worshippers.

We should also emphasise that these texts must only represent a tiny proportion of the original material, and that the divine landscape of Petra in the Nabataean period was undoubtedly more crowded and diverse than they can allow us to reconstruct. They do, however, show enough to indicate the supreme position of Dushara. The phrase 'Dushara and all the

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[49] E.g. Gawlikowski 1990 p. 2671 where Isis is described "le seul cas certain d'une divinité étrangere adoptée à Pétra"; Healey 2001 pp. 137–141 where Isis and Atargatis are labelled 'foreign goddesses'; and Bartlett 2007 p. 73 who describes all three as 'foreign'.

[50] For a fuller discussion, see Alpass 2010 pp. 107–109.

[51] See below p. 128.

gods' appears in two texts (9; 11), clearly setting him apart from Petra's other deities. Few further details of any hierarchical relationship between the gods emerges, only the association between al-Uzza and *mr' byt*' in 18. *mr' byt*' is usually identified as Dushara, and al-Uzza has therefore often been seen as the consort of Dushara at Petra.[52] Modern analyses of Petra's gods, however, have often gone well beyond the evidence in attempts to construct a series of relationships between the 'divine personalities' that inhabited the city. Healey's approach of emphasising the importance of a male and female pair of supreme deities, and classifying all the other gods as somehow different, has also been adopted by other scholars, particularly when discussing the two main temples in the town centre. That there were two of these again seems to suggest an important pair of deities, and so the evidence for Petra's many gods is conflated and simplified to construct the deities that inhabited these temples. This overlooks, however, the existence of the many other sanctuaries around Petra, and the possibility that more temples will be found in the town centre. Furthermore, there is very little sign in the inscriptions that the ancient worshippers shared the same interest in divine relationships and identifications as modern scholars. After collecting these texts, therefore, instead of attempting to formulate a structure for Petra's gods, we should rather emphasise that we have here several different deities mentioned in a number of different areas, attached to a number of different monuments and in a number of different contexts. No patterns or overarching schemes seem to emerge to bind them together. It is rather their variety that emerges, and we shall see that this is mirrored in the different groups and contexts that Petra's citizens worshipped.

Worshippers

This section will be organised around the different groups in which Petra's citizens gathered to worship. We shall begin by examining the public monuments: areas which would have been used by the majority of the population and where large gatherings could be held, and which would have played a central part in any important festivals and public rituals. The temples of the town centre are most important here, but it is also necessary to include a series of monuments around the Deir. Next are a

[52] E.g. Milik and Starcky 1975 p. 126; Zayadine 2003 p. 62; Bartlett 2007 p. 67. Healey is more cautious, noting al-Uzza's possible association with Bosra (Healey 2001 p. 115).

large variety of monuments we could term as collective, in that they seem to have served smaller groups. Petra's 'high-places' with their processional ways shall be included here as, despite their prominent position, it does not seem that they could accommodate large crowds of worshippers. Also included are the great numbers of rock-cut sanctuaries, often arranged along narrow wadis or in prominent positions in the mountains. Sometimes, their locations seem to have been chosen because of their inaccessibility or secluded position, but without inscriptions we cannot be sure that they were restricted to a particular group. This is not the case for our third category, private monuments. The importance of private religious associations, *mrzḥ'*, shows clearly in Petra's inscriptions, but we can detect other groups of monuments that seem to have had a particular relevance to certain groups or families. Tombs, for example, where the gods had an important role, were certainly under private ownership.[53] Other monuments seem to have been the responsibility of still smaller groups, perhaps even individuals. Isolated idol blocks and figurines, often overlooked in studies of Petra's religious practices, will be included here.

By arranging the material in this way, we shall hopefully gain as representative an overview as possible of Petra's religious monuments and the rituals and groups that employed them. Firstly, however, it must be cautioned that this will only cover a fraction of the material, and will therefore not be able to give a full account of the number and variety of monuments and contexts of worship in the city. As will become clear throughout, the above categories can only be defined in very broad terms, and some monuments can be placed just as accurately in one or another. Furthermore, Petra's sacred spaces could be used in a number of different ways by different groups of worshippers. In categorising them, there is a danger of reducing their complexity and imposing a false sense of uniformity on what is a very diverse religious landscape. There are, however, certain patterns that do emerge, and as long as we bear in mind the limitations of this model, approaching the material along these lines will move us closest to the experiences of Petra's worshippers.

Public Monuments

While the traces of Petra's monumental centre (fig. 2) did not entirely escape the attention of the early surveyors, its rock-cut monuments were

[53] The tombs of Nabataea's kings may be an exception to this, see below p. 80, n. 166.

always first and foremost in their eyes. The first detailed survey of the town centre was made by an expedition of the Deutsch-türkische Denkmalschutz-Kommando, led by Bachmann, Watzinger and Wiegand, who also produced archaeological plans of the surviving remains.[54] The names they assigned to its structures have survived until the present day, and persist in many publications even where their accuracy is doubtful.[55] Excavations of the most important structures throughout the twentieth century, as outlined above, have gradually improved our understanding of their chronology. Before these, it was often suggested that many could be best dated to the Roman period, after AD 106, but this can no longer be maintained. The chronological data available for each building, which will be discussed below, points to a major programme of monumental construction starting towards the end of the first century BC, which probably included the Qasr-el-Bint and the structures south of the western part of the colonnaded street.[56] The street itself, however, may be an exception to this, dating perhaps to the end of the first century AD or even the early Roman period, as did the temenos gate and paving of the Qasr el-Bint temenos.[57] These seem to have belonged to a later phase of monumentalisation, which may have also included the structures in the eastern part of the town centre.[58]

With this broad chronology established, the interpretation of the buildings of the town centre has involved explaining these two phases of monumental construction. The second, later phase is often connected with the Roman annexation and the granting to Petra of the title of Metropolis soon after, although a date at the end of the first century AD cannot be ruled out. The earlier, certainly Nabataean phase is now often viewed as part of a coherent building programme of royal initiative carried out

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54 Bachmann *et al.* 1921.

55 This is discussed in Bedal 2004 p. 21.

56 For recent overviews of the chronology of the town centre see Bedal 2004 pp. 28–38 and Parr 2007.

57 This later date had already been suggested by Parr 1970 p. 370. It was also the outcome of recent excavations led by David Graf as part of the Hellenistic Petra Project (See Graf 2007b; Graf *et al.* 2007).

58 As these are generally less well known than those buildings in the western part of the town centre, their chronology has not yet been established in detail. Excavations undertaken on the large staircase leading from the colonnaded street to the 'Upper Market' seem to have established a date for that structure at the beginning of the Roman period (Fiema 1998 p. 420). A Trajanic inscription belonging to the monumental arch at its entrance has therefore been seen as marking the construction of the whole complex, and not just the arch itself (Fiema 1998 p. 418; Parr 2007 p. 294. For the text see Kirkbridge 1960 pp. 119–120; *IGLS* XXI: IV 37; *Quellen* pp. 236–237).

during the reigns of Obodas III and Aretas IV. Part of this would have encompassed the Qasr el-Bint and the 'Baths' to the south of the temenos entrance. Their interpretation as baths has recently been challenged, as they do not resemble bath structures elsewhere in the Near East. Zayadine has suggested that this was rather part of a palatial residence, and this is now followed by a number of archaeologists.[59] Immediately to the east, the 'Great Temple' may have continued the complex. We shall see below that its interpretation as a temple encounters serious difficulties, and a function as a royal audience hall has now been ascribed to the building by many scholars. Immediately adjoining it to the east seems to have been a *paradeisos* and pool complex, which strengthens the identification of these structures as royal buildings.[60] As this complex emerged, parallels with other Near Eastern royal building programmes were noticed. The rivalry between the Nabataean and Herodian dynasties has recently received particular attention in this context. Many architectural and sculptural parallels between Petra and Herod's palaces and other public buildings have been noted, and it seems possible that this spurt in monumental building by Nabataea's kings was driven by a desire to emulate and supersede their Jewish neighbours to the north.[61] We should finish here by noting, however, that the chronology and interpretation of Petra's monumental town centre is by no means settled, and further excavations will no doubt modify the picture.

Temple of the Winged Lions

This temple, to the north of the colonnaded street, cannot be so satisfactorily linked with any building programme. Excavation began here in the 1970s by an American team led by Philip Hammond, who named the structure after its capitals decorated with winged lions.[62] Its layout quickly suggested a sacred building. The temple itself is approached through two colonnaded courtyards on different levels, building upwards from the north bank of the Wadi Musa. The design of the temple seems

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[59] Zayadine 1987 p. 139. We should also mention here a large structure on top of the Umm el-Biyara uncovered during excavations in the 1960s (Bennett 1980). Although this was originally thought to be a sanctuary, Schmid has recently reinterpreted it as a palatial residence overlooking the city centre (Schmid 2009 pp. 343–345).

[60] See below p. 62.

[61] See, for example, Bedal 2004 pp. 26–28; Schmid 2009.

[62] For the capitals see Hammond 1977. The first excavation reports appeared in 1975 and the final report in 1996 (Hammond 1975 and 1996). See also Hammond 1977–78 and 1982.

to have been reinterpreted since Hammond's excavations, and the plan shown on fig. 2 is only a recent development. Hammond thought the temple to be divided into two sections, a main rectangular *naos* preceded by a narrower *pronaos*. The southern wall of the *pronaos* was penetrated by two narrow doorways giving entrance to the temple. However, it now seems that this southern wall belonged to a subterranean room, and the temple was laid out in a more usual distyle design.[63] This has important implications for the interpretation of the rituals conducted inside, as will be discussed below. At the centre of the cella stood a 1.1m high cult platform, surrounded by columns, and with a further row of columns running down its east and west sides. Two small stairways led up to the platform, on which it seems the most important idol block or cult image would have been placed. The layout is very reminiscent of the temple at Khirbet Dharih, where holes in the floor of the cult platform may have been intended to hold idol blocks, although there is no sign of these here. Inscription no. 6 below (p. 119), which was found in one of the rooms around the temple rather than inside the cella, provides a *terminus ante quem* of AD 28/29.

The main deity of the temple has been the object of much discussion. The best piece of evidence comes in the form of an eye-idol found during the 1975 season, which originally seems to have been inserted into the wall somewhere inside the cella (fig. 3). This carries more anthropomorphic features than Petra's other eye idols, with a mouth and eyebrows, and is generally more naturalistic in appearance. A wreath running above the eyes may have had a precious stone set into its centre, and the ring surrounding it could suggest a version of the *basileion* of Isis.[64] A brief inscription at the base of the stone reads 'The Goddess of Hayyan, son of Nayibat' (*'lht hyn br nybt*). Discussions of the temple's deity have therefore often involved attempts to equate the *'lht hyn* with one of Petra's better known goddesses. Hammond himself first attributed the temple to Atargatis, but later changed his mind to Allat. His interpretation is based around what he sees as evidence for a mystery cult in the temple.[65] He points to the restricted access to the cella, with only two narrow doors,

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[63] Kanellopoulos and Akasheh 2001 p. 7 signalled this as "proposal for the portico of the Temple of the Winged Lions" in their new map of Petra's town centre. Netzer 2003 pp. 81–85 gives details of the southern wall of a subterranean room in his description of the temple and follows the newly proposed layout. See also Kanellopoulos 2004 pp. 225–228.

[64] See Zayadine 1991b p. 289.

[65] Hammond 1996 pp. 111–116.

and suggests curtains could be drawn around a cult image on the platform. He sees many iconographical connections to the cult of Isis elsewhere in the Mediterranean, but does not think it likely that she would have been the chief deity here, and so settles on Allat as the most likely candidate to whom Isis motifs could be attached.[66] Healey exposes the main difficulty with this thesis, that Allat is not named in any inscription from Petra, but there are also serious problems with Hammond's methodology.[67] It involves drawing in parallels from far beyond Petra, and ignores that there is no evidence for any mystery cult elsewhere in the kingdom.[68] The screening of the cult image was not uncommon for the Near East or the wider Roman world, and so should not point necessarily to a mystery cult. Furthermore, the new proposal for the layout gives the temple a far more open plan, and so removes one of the major supports for Hammond's theory.

Other scholars have suggested that al-'Uzza was the main deity of the Temple of the Winged Lions.[69] This is based largely on circumstantial evidence, rather than anything from the temple itself. It is argued that if the Qasr el-Bint was dedicated to Dushara, then this second most important temple of Petra could have been dedicated to his consort, who is usually assumed to be al-'Uzza at Petra. It may well be the case that al-'Uzza was worshipped inside, and even Allat, but the evidence cannot allow us to be certain. These attempts to identify the temple's main deity, however, have obscured two points that we can be rather more certain of. Firstly, it is highly probable that more than one deity received a cult here, as is often the case in the Near East. Secondly, it is surely significant that we have a deity described in such personal terms at the heart of one of Petra's most important temples. The scholarly approach to this has been to look beyond the 'Goddess of Hayyan' in an attempt to discover the true nature or name of this deity and identify her with one of Petra's better known goddesses. This, however, may not have been in the mind of the ancient worshipper, who chose rather to stress his personal relationship with the deity. We shall see that this is a theme that reappears many more times at Petra.

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[66] E.g. Hammond 1990 p. 124: "Thus we conclude that the supreme goddess of the "Temple of the Winged Lions" was Allat, in borrowed attributes and aspects . . ."

[67] Healey 2001 p. 44.

[68] Much of his synthesis, for example, is based on excerpts from Apuleius' *Golden Ass*. Reconstructing the details on the basis of this account, which has no connection to Petra, has drawn criticism (e.g. Dirven 2002 col. 610).

[69] E.g. fig. 2 where Kanellopoulos and Akasheh label the building "Temple of al-'Uzza".

Qasr el-Bint

The Qasr el-Bint, Petra's largest temple, is surrounded by similar difficulties of interpretation.[70] That this was Petra's most important temple is suggested not only by its size but also its prominent position and large temenos. This joins the end of the colonnaded street, and follows the southern bank of the Wadi Musa before opening out into a wider courtyard in front of the temple. At the centre of this stood a large altar which could be seen from all parts of the temenos.[71] The temenos itself has been the subject of much recent attention. It now seems that the elongated courtyard shown on fig. 2 was not how the complex appeared in the Nabataean period. Excavations around the temenos gate have shown not only that this structure probably belonged to the early Roman period, but also the paving of the temenos courtyard.[72] It seems that, before the construction of the colonnaded street and temenos in the Roman period, the Wadi Musa was much wider in this part of the town centre, and extended all the way to the southern wall of the temenos.[73] Graf suggests that the main entrance to the temple in the Nabataean period may rather have been from the north, over a bridge leading from the northern side of the Wadi Musa. This would explain why the temple is not orientated eastwards like the temenos, but rather faces to the north.[74] The chronology of the temenos complex, however, is far from being satisfactorily established and we still do not have a firm idea of its shape or appearance in the Nabataean period.

Unfortunately, similar uncertainty surrounds the chronology of the temple itself. This has quite a different design to that of the Temple of the Winged Lions. The cella has three smaller compartments at its southern end. The middle has a raised floor which is accessed by two small

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[70] For the archaeology see, among others, Wright 1961; Parr *et al.* 1968; Zayadine 1985; Zayadine *et al.* 2003; Graf 2006b.

[71] Recently two smaller altars, which do not appear on fig. 2, were uncovered just to the west of the large altar, next to the exedra in the western wall of the temenos (see the detailed plan in Augé *et al.* 2002 p. 312). A number of fragments of imperial statues and inscriptions honouring the emperors have been uncovered in connection with the exedra, and it seems that it was constructed at some point in the second century AD in honour of the imperial family (see Augé *et al.* 2002; Zayadine 2002, 2008).

[72] There is also no sign that the temenos gate was based on an earlier structure, as was often assumed, although there does seem to have been some monumental building in the area in the Nabataean period (see Graf *et al.* 2007 pp. 224–229).

[73] These are the results of the excavations reported in Graf *et al.* 2007. At a number of points wadi gravel was found a metre or two beneath the temenos paving.

[74] Graf 2006b p. 449.

stairways, similar to the podium of the Temple of the Winged Lions, and the cult image was presumably housed here. The two side chambers were each fronted by a pair of columns, and stairways lead up from these to the roof. The temple still stands to an impressive height, and the architectural and stucco decoration is well preserved in places.[75] The chronology of the structure, however, remains somewhat more obscure. An inscription found towards the western end of a line of benches running along the southern wall of the temenos was often taken as providing a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the temenos and the temple. This seems to have come from the base of a statue of Aretas IV (9 BC–AD 40), and records that it was set up by a cult official named 'Abdu.[76] Three more Nabataean texts from the complex also mention members of the royal family.[77] The temenos and its benches, then, must have been in place at least by the reign of Aretas IV. However, it has recently emerged that the first inscription was probably not in its original position, and so cannot be used to date the benches or the temple.[78] The other texts were likewise discovered in secondary positions. With this removed, the dating of the building depends on finding stylistic parallels for the architectural decoration, and the most recent suggestions for this place the completion of the Qasr somewhere towards the end of the reign of Aretas IV.[79] Before this, there seems to have been some kind of monumental building at the site, as suggested by blocks found reused under the monumental stairway, but the form of this has not been established. Zayadine considers that it may have been "une plate-forme à bétyle", and goes on to tentatively indicate a date in the first half of the first century BC for the structure.[80]

Reliable evidence for the deities that were worshipped in the Qasr el-Bint during the Nabataean period is also unfortunately lacking. We shall see that Tyche (no. 24, p. 106 below), Zeus Hagios (26), Aphrodite (28) and

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[75] The decoration is the subject of detailed study by Jacqueline Dentzer-Feydy in Zayadine *et al.* 2003.

[76] Starcky and Strugnell 1966 pp. 236–244.

[77] These are collected in Zayadine *et al.* 2003 pp. 90–91.

[78] Graf 2006b p. 449; Graf *et al.* 2007 pp. 230–236.

[79] In her dating of Petra's monuments McKenzie places the Qasr el-Bint in the same group as the Khazneh, to which she gives a *terminus ante quem* of the beginning of the first century AD (McKenzie 2005 p. 40). After recent excavations, however, the date of the Khazneh has been brought forward to a date somewhere more towards the end of the first half of the first century AD (Farajat and Nawafleh 2005), and so has the Qasr el-Bint (Graf 2006b p. 448). In Zayadine *et al.* 2003, the temple is assigned first to the reign of Aretas IV (p. 96), and then to the reign of Obodas III (p. 117).

[80] Zayadine *et al.* 2003 p. 83.

perhaps Zeus Hypsistos (27) are mentioned in Greek texts found near the building or its temenos. Some of these, however, are clearly in a secondary context, and so their association with the complex cannot be assured. They almost certainly all date from the Roman period, although this is only explicit in the case of no. 24. Other important pieces of cultic evidence include the hand of a monumental sculpture, perhaps the image of a god or goddess, discovered during the early excavations, and a small eye idol block found in the cella.[81] From outside Petra, we should also include here the Aphrodesion mentioned in the archive of Babatha. This is a collection of Aramaic and Greek papyri, found in a cave at Naḥal Ḥever near the western shore of the Dead Sea, dating from AD 93/94 to 132. They concern the legal affairs of a Jewish woman named Babatha who owned property in Nabataean territory at the southern end of the Dead Sea. The document in question is an extract from the minutes of the Petra *boule*, dated to AD 124, and records that Babatha's son Jesus has been appointed two guardians. It notes that the minutes are also displayed in the Aphrodesion at Petra.[82] Bowersock and others had suggested that this may refer to the Temple of the Winged Lions, but that was before the discovery of text no. 28. If we do want to identify the Aphrodesion mentioned in the papyrus with one of the temples so far discovered, then, the Qasr el-Bint is the most likely candidate.

In his discussions, Zayadine draws attention to the text that may mention Zeus Hypsistos, whom he equates to Baalshamin or Dushara, and that which mentions Aphrodite, and concludes that "les documents épigraphiques et archéologiques disponibles autorisent à identifier les dieux principaux du Qasr comme étant Ba'alshamîn et al-'Uzzâ-Aphrodite".[83] Aside from Aphrodite, however, we have no sign of these divine names from the Qasr. Zayadine's method depends on finding Semitic equivalents for the deities mentioned in the Greek texts. Zeus and Dushara are connected in an early text from Miletus, and perhaps in text no. 31 below from Petra in the Roman period.[84] Al-'Uzza and Aphrodite are also connected in an early text from Cos.[85] There is no evidence, however, of such an understanding of these deities from Petra in the

[81] The hand is reported in Parr 1967–68 p. 18, the idol block in Zayadine and Farajat 1991 p. 293.

[82] Lewis 1989 no. 12. We also have evidence from Nabataea for temples being used as storage points for legal documents at Hegra (see below p. 138).

[83] Zayadine *et al.* 2003 pp. 104–105.

[84] Miletus: *Quellen* pp. 127–128; Roche 1996 pp. 80–83.

[85] Cos: *Quellen* pp. 128–129; Roche 1996 pp. 78–80.

Nabataean period, and the texts from Miletus and Cos, although made during the kingdom, come from quite a different context. Simply transporting these individual interpretations and applying them to Petra's temples is therefore very problematic.

That there are two gods in the temple seems to be based on the idea that Petra had two chief deities, as discussed above.[86] That argument, however, has also been used rather to suggest that the Qasr el-Bint was dedicated to Dushara, and the Temple of the Winged Lions to his consort.[87] Because of its size and prominent position, the Qasr would have been a fitting home for Petra's most important deity. This assumption may need to be slightly revised, given the new data on the date of the temenos, but the Qasr still seems to have been Petra's largest temple in the Nabataean period. Its importance may also be indicated by a number of inscriptions found in the temenos mentioning the Nabataean royal family.[88] These have led to the suggestion that there may have been a royal portrait gallery along the benches, with statues of the Nabataean kings and their families.[89] If this was the case, then it becomes more likely that Dushara was associated with the temple. The connection between Dushara and the Nabataean king is made explicit in Petra in text no. 9 below, but also emerges elsewhere in the kingdom. His temenos would therefore be a fitting location for a royal gallery. Unfortunately, the texts were not necessarily found in their original location, so their association with the Qasr or its temenos cannot be proven, but their concentration around the complex is at least suggestive. We cannot be certain of the identity of any deity that received a cult here in the Nabataean period, let alone to whom the temple was dedicated. It would be surprising if Dushara was not important here, but it would be equally surprising if he were the only deity associated with the site.

'Great Temple'

The 'Great Temple', which has been recently excavated by Brown University, has even more fundamental problems of interpretation.[90] The

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[86] See above p. 50.

[87] See e.g. fig. 2 where the Qasr is labelled "Temple of Dushares".

[88] These are collected in Zayadine *et al.* 2003 pp. 90–91.

[89] E.g. Parr 2007 p. 289. The author makes this suggestion in the context of the Aretas IV inscription, and cautions that we cannot say whether this gallery would have been devoted just to that king or others as well.

[90] For a history of the excavations and a detailed bibliography visit http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/Petra. The most comprehensive excavation reports to have emerged from the project are Joukowsky 1998 and 2007c.

description of the building as a temple originated with the expedition of the Deutsch-türkische Denkmalschutz-Kommando at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the label has survived until the present. There is now serious doubt, however, whether the building functioned mainly as a temple. It seems to have gone through several phases of construction.[91] The basic layout comprises of a monumental propylaeum leading off the colonnaded street to the 'Lower Temenos', which is flanked on its east and west sides with triple colonnades. From here, three stairways lead up to the 'Upper Temenos', which holds the most important structure. In its very first phase, the middle of the first century BC, this building has been characterised as a distyle in antis temple. In its second phase, dated to the last quarter of same century, it seems to have been expanded into a tetrastyle in antis design. This is the layout show on fig. 2. Unusually, however, the building is only walled on three sides, with the northern façade remaining open. In the next major phase, dated to the middle of the second century AD, the most significant change was the insertion of a small theatre structure at the heart of the building (fig. 4).

The discovery of a theatre at the heart of the structure cast considerable doubt over its functioning as a temple. As a result, two different lines of interpretation have emerged. The first, followed by Joukowsky, maintains that the building was primarily a temple, at least in its Nabataean phase, and emphasises any religious artefacts found at the site.[92] A pair of idol blocks, for example, was carved into a large niche on one of the walls on the western end of the propylaeum. Another, the 'sword deity', so named because of its peculiar shape, is lightly carved into the bedrock at the north-west corner of the complex. Joukowsky concludes that the first pair "clearly indicate that this installation is a sacred place", and also mentions a nefesh found nearby.[93] However, this interpretation as purely a religious building is not maintained after the insertion of the theatre in the Roman period. Joukowsky suggests that at this time "the heart of the city was the Great Temple as its monumental cult and administrative centre", and so sees the building as serving two functions.[94] The second line of interpretation, followed by Schluntz, sees the building primarily as an administrative structure in both its Nabataean and

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[91] See the useful table in Joukowsky 2007a p. 85.

[92] See, for example, Joukowsky and Basile 2001 pp. 51–57; Joukowsky 2007b pp. 390–392.

[93] Joukowsky 2007b p. 390.

[94] Joukowsky 2007a p. 101.

Roman phases.[95] Schluntz draws attention to a number of features that set the 'Great Temple' apart from the other temples of Petra and Nabataea. The most important of these are that there is no sign of a large outdoor altar, that no religious inscriptions have so far been found from the site and that the 'cella' is not enclosed on its north side. She argues that the building rather served as a royal audience hall, and is able to produce some very close parallels from other Hellenistic centres, particularly the Herodian palaces. In the Roman period, after the insertion of the cella, the building continued in this administrative function as the city's bouleuterion, but also functioned as an odeion. Both interpretations draw on the argument that if the building served a religious purpose in the Nabataean period, it is unlikely to have been 'desacralised' in the Roman period. Other temples in Nabataea have phases of construction which date from the Nabataean and Roman periods, and there certainly seems to have been a desire to preserve the religious function, and even the specific form, of the temples.[96] Joukowsky argues that this shows that the Nabataean temple must therefore have retained a religious function in the Roman period, whereas Schluntz argues that Roman odeion/bouleuterion would not have been built on a sacred building.

The second line of interpretation is for the moment the strongest. There is not enough evidence to show the complex as a temple in the Nabataean period. If the 'cella' did house a cult image at that time, then replacing its surroundings entirely with a theatre structure does not seem to show due respect for the deity. Cultic theatres were a part of several sanctuaries in the Near East, but they were placed in a secondary position and did not form the cella.[97] The religious artefacts from the site are all too peripheral to affect our interpretation of the building. They do show, however, that attempting to categorise it as an entirely secular or religious space is not possible. Rather than revealing that the complex served some kind of dual function, it exposes a problem with the debate. Such a clear division between religious and secular did not exist in antiquity. That we find some religious artefacts in the complex therefore does not mean that we should categorise it as a temple. This is especially true for Petra, where the thousands of religious monuments penetrate every part of the site.

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[95] Schluntz 1999.

[96] This is particularly clear at Khirbet Tannur and Khirbet Dharih. See below ch. 6.

[97] See in general Nielsen 2002. In her discussion of Petra, she remarks that "the Great Temple included a theatrical structure in its cella (!), which as far as I know is unique" (p. 146).

Although they reveal the presence of the gods, they cannot all be considered as forming part of temples or sanctuaries. The religious artefacts from the 'Great Temple' similarly show the presence of the deities, but this does not mean that the building could not have served a primarily administrative purpose. Indeed, Schluntz analyses how such royal audience halls had a multitude of functions, and also served as banqueting spaces.[98] We shall see that the gods are inseparable from such activities in Petra, and so finding evidence for them here is not surprising.[99]

The second line of interpretation is also more attractive in light of the discovery of the Hellenistic pool complex and *paradeisos* immediately to the east of the 'Great Temple'. In the early maps, this area was labelled the 'Lower Market', but after excavations in 1998 this description had to be revised.[100] These revealed that, at about the same time as the construction of the tetrastyle phase of the 'Great Temple', a large rectangular pool was constructed here with an island pavilion at its centre and a formal garden in front. Again, parallels with other Hellenistic centres were forthcoming, particularly from the Herodian kingdom. The ability to collect such an amount of water in Petra's arid environment would have been a powerful display of kingly authority. Bedal discusses the complex in the context of the buildings south of the colonnaded street, and concludes that it seems likely that they formed part of a palace complex.[101] The 'Great Temple' and the pool complex were connected, and the royal audience hall would have commanded views over the *paradeisos*, which is consistent with other Hellenistic palaces. Taking all this into account, it becomes more and more difficult to describe the 'Great Temple' as a public religious monument. While there is some evidence for the deities here, it does not seem to have been the focus for cults or public rituals that the other two temples of the town centre provided in the Nabataean period.

The Deir

The Deir (fig. 5) should also be considered here, although it is quite a different monument to the temples of the town centre.[102] Like the 'Great Temple', there is some uncertainty as to its function. Petra's rock-cut

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98 Schluntz 1999 pp. 97–101.

99 For ritual banqueting at Petra, see below pp. 77–79.

100 For what follows see Bedal 2004.

101 *Ibid.* pp. 176–178.

102 For descriptions of the Deir and its surroundings see BD 462; D 446; Lindner 1984; Lindner *et al.* 1984; McKenzie 2005 pp. 159–161.

facades normally mark tombs, but several features set the Deir apart from other facades. Firstly, it is in an area where there are very few tomb facades.[103] Secondly, the internal layout does not immediately reveal any sign of burials inside. This is not unusual for Petra, but the interior suggests it may have served some other purpose. There is a large central recess in the back wall, framed with pillars and an arch above. Two small stairways lead up to this, in a similar design to those on the cult podium of the Temple of the Winged Lions. The large central recess finds parallels in other tombs, but the stairs leading to it are more unusual. They suggest that the space was meant to be accessed regularly rather than a place of burial. Furthermore, two low benches running along the side walls of the chamber suggest it may have functioned as a biclinium. Thirdly, the large flat courtyard in front of the façade could be interpreted as a temenos. There are signs of monumental construction here, with the remains of a row of columns lying along its southern side. More important is the small rock-cut podium just to the north of the courtyard (fig. 6; D 447 on fig. 7). This sits on a platform overlooking the courtyard, although it is set a little way back, and would have been visible from parts of it. It is tempting to follow the interpretation of this as an altar, and to therefore view it as part of a temenos that includes the Deir as its temple.[104]

There may be cause, however, to modify this picture slightly, at least with regard to the Deir itself and its courtyard. Firstly, the layout and components of the 'cella' are not directly comparable to the temples of the town centre or those elsewhere in Nabataea. If the benches were intended for ritual feasting inside, this particularly would set the Deir apart from the city's built temples. They place it more in the tradition of Petra's numerous rock-cut triclinia, which seem to have been the concern of smaller more restricted groups of worshippers.[105] Secondly, the excavations at the Wadi Farasa have revealed how rock-cut facades could form part of palatial complexes which had a residential, funerary and religious function.[106] The remains of monumental building in the courtyard show

[103] McKenzie 2005 p. 161: "It is the only façade in an area which does not include any tombs with loculi".

[104] This is certainly the interpretation of Dalman, although he remarks at the unusually off-centre position of the altar and suggests it may have been part of an earlier complex (Dalman 1908 p. 272), and has been followed by most authors since (e.g. Healey 2001 pp. 48–49; Ball 2000 pp. 300–303).

[105] These are examined below pp. 77–79.

[106] Examined below p. 80.

that the Deir was part of a bigger complex.[107] Details of this are not yet known, but it may be preferable to place the Deir within this category of monument rather than to classify it as a temple. If we follow this interpretation, then it becomes a private monument, the concern of an immensely wealthy family.

It is not only the Deir itself and its courtyard, however, that provide evidence for large cult assemblies in this area, and the structure may well have been incorporated into a much larger religious complex. There rises a small massif opposite the façade, labelled the 'Burgberg' by Dalman, which holds the ruins of what could be a temple (fig. 8).[108] Here, steps lead up to a plateau where there are remains of a series of columns, a cistern and a chamber cut into the rock. At the centre of the rear wall of the chamber survives an exquisitely carved niche which faces out of the chamber towards the Deir, although there is no idol block. Lindner provides an evocative description of the rituals that may have been conducted here, envisaging priests and pilgrims taking water from the cistern and the rays of the sun illuminating the idol block or statue within the niche.[109] It certainly seems that some rituals would have taken place here, but we have as yet no sign of an altar suitable for large public ceremonies. Between the 'Burgberg' and the Deir, however, is a large circular enclosure, which seems to have been surrounded by a low wall or benches (fig. 5, foreground). Again, a kind of temenos has been suggested, and we may imagine worshippers gathering here in connection with rituals either on the 'Burgberg' or at the Deir, or both.[110] A more precise function cannot be ascribed without excavation, but the arrangement of these monuments certainly suggests large public religious gatherings.

The same may be true of the area a little further north from the Deir, where a number of rock-cut monuments face out towards an area of open ground (fig. 9). There are a variety of monuments here, including niches, cisterns, and chambers. A monumental staircase or row of benches was built up against the rock face, the rock-cut portion of which still survives and is visible in fig. 9. Dalman comments on the similarity with rows in a theatre, but concludes rather that these were intended for

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[107] Schmid lists the Deir as one of a number of facades in Petra that may have been part of complexes similar to that in the Wadi Farasa (Schmid 2007a p. 213).

[108] The monument is D 490 and D491 on fig. 7. See now Lindner *et al.* 1984 pp. 163–168.

[109] Lindner *et al.* 1984 p. 166.

[110] Dalman 1908 p. 273 suggests the plateau would have been used for festivals, hosting dances, games and sacrifices.

votive offerings.[111] With the evidence of other public assembly places nearby, perhaps the first interpretation is preferable. In front of the rock face, Dalman noted the ruins of two rectangular buildings with column drums, which he labelled temples.[112] The ground plan of the more northerly of these, D 452, was measured at 3.90m × 4.15m. Lindner and his team have investigated the more southerly structure more recently.[113] It is much larger than the first, measuring 19m × 13m, but the exact ground plan could not be ascertained. Fragments of pottery from the site suggested to Lindner a date in the first or second centuries AD, and he concludes with Dalman that it probably functioned as a temple. We must be necessarily cautious, given that these buildings have not been investigated in detail and as yet no epigraphic evidence has been found for cult activity in them. However, it is again tempting to see an area set up for large religious assemblies with a temple at its heart. The smaller structure, rather than being a temple, has about the correct dimensions for an altar, and the benches built against the rock face may have provided seating for an audience. We even have evidence for priestly activity in the area. In a narrow gorge a little further to the north survives a badly eroded relief showing two figures in an act of offering (D 464). They are flanked by a camel on either side and stand around two altars and a niche in the centre (fig. 10.1 and 10.2).

Another look at the same set of monuments, however, could provide us with a different interpretation of this area. Inscription no. 19 below is carved into the rock face opposite the buildings (see location on fig. 9). It was carved in a hollow above an empty niche (D 456), which itself was carved above a chamber that seems to have been a large cistern. The inscription names the *mrzḥ*' of Obodat the god, and so presumably this location was somehow significant to this group. A *mrzḥ*' seems to be a private group restricted to a certain number of members. Zayadine sees the inscription as evidence that the whole of the Deir complex was devoted to the cult of Obodat, but that may give the text greater significance that it had in antiquity.[114] It is certainly too distant to be connected with the Deir itself. It does reveal, however, that this space was used by private religious organisations. Similarly, a number of rock-cut chambers within

[111] *Ibid.* p. 274.
[112] These are D 452 and 453.
[113] Lindner *et al.* 1984 pp. 174–177.
[114] Zayadine and Farajat 1991 p. 284. He also views Obodat the god as a deified Nabataean king, but the evidence for this is not strong (see below pp. 156–159).

or nearby the complex seem to have been intended for smaller groups. A good example is the chamber connected to the camel relief mentioned above (D 463), which has a small plain rectangular idol block carved high on its back wall. Closer is chamber D 462, which has a larger and more elaborate niche on its back wall. Like the *mrzḥ*' text, these seem to show how private or more restricted groups of worshippers used the space, as well as larger assemblies. We have to move outside Petra to find parallels for such an arrangement. The large sanctuary at Khirbet Dharih had two large courtyards and altars for public rituals, but these were surrounded by a number of small triclinia and chambers where smaller groups could gather.[115] It is difficult, then, to categorise these sacred spaces as public or private, as they were probably being used in a number of different ways by a number of different groups.

Collective Monuments

Here we shall examine monuments that, by their size and location, seem to have been intended for smaller groups than those discussed above. Exactly by which groups they were used will be discussed throughout, but without epigraphic evidence this can unfortunately remain no more than supposition. It at least seems likely that some (most notably the high-places) would have been important to a larger proportion of the population than others.

Processional Ways

Many routes through Petra's wadis have been labelled 'processional ways' by scholars. There is actually no evidence for large public processions in Petra, or even in Nabataea, but the nature of the evidence is such that we cannot reasonably have expected this to survive.[116] The concentration of religious monuments along some routes leading into the mountains from the town centre certainly suggests that they were host to processions. The route up to the Madras high-place from the Bab-as-Siq is a good example. The trail is easily recognisable today, following a series of rock-cut paths and steps that leaves from the Bab-as-Siq about a hundred metres before

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[115] See below pp. 209–214 and fig. 56.

[116] Although see above p. 43 for the camel relief in the Siq and the 'Horse and Rider Relief' in the Bab as-Siq that could be taken as evidence for religious processions in Petra. The labelling of routes as 'processional ways' by scholars, even when the evidence is very meagre, is common in the study of the Roman Near East. See Kaizer 2002 pp. 200–203 for a discussion of the evidence from Palmyra.

it curves westwards into the Siq. Dalman describes the route to the mountaintop, noting that a number of monuments are encountered on the way.[117] At one point, for example, there are two niches close together (D 61 and 62), the first accessed by a narrow flight of steps, with a basin carved between them. The route continues to the summit, where there was an expansive arrangement of cult monuments and platforms, and then drops away on the western side, towards the plateau on the southern side of the Siq. The Madbah high-place similarly has two main routes of access, and this may reflect how the procession could move away from the summit in a different direction to which it came.[118] The routes to Petra's other high-places are similarly marked with niches, idol blocks and inscriptions. They are sometimes narrow and lead only to the high-places, often with no evidence at all of domestic dwellings nearby. As such, it seems clear that their primary function was to provide worshippers access to the mountaintop sanctuaries, and the monuments that line them suggest that rituals were carried out at certain points along the route.

We should be cautious, however, of labelling any route that holds monuments as a 'processional way', as that may obscure its other functions. The Siq itself, for example, has often been characterised as being part of a long processional way that stretched from somewhere in the modern town all the way to the Qasr el-Bint.[119] There is certainly a concentration of religious monuments of all kinds along its path, and it is difficult to imagine that the impressive gorge would not have gained some religious significance.[120] We shall see, however, that Petra's sanctuaries were often located in enclosed natural spaces like that of the Siq. There also seem to be points along the Siq where monuments were arranged to form a sanctuary. About halfway along the gorge, for example, where faults in the north and south wall meet at the same point creating a wider area, a number of religious monuments are concentrated. There are niches and idol blocks in the walls, and recent excavations uncovered an altar and a large settling pool which was apparently used to deposit religious offerings.[121] Clearly some rituals were carried out here for the small audiences that

[117] Dalman 1908 pp. 117–119.

[118] This is the suggestion of Dentzer and Saupin 1997 p. 300.

[119] See, for example, Dentzer and Saupin 1997 p. 300. They note that the Siq is paved, and would therefore not be well suited to caravan traffic.

[120] See Ruben 2003 for an overview of the excavation and restoration work undertaken in the Siq as well as details of its monuments, including c. 65 niches and an even greater number of idol blocks.

[121] Ruben 2003 p. 79.

could fill the space, but whether they were always part of larger religious processions cannot be ascertained. It seems likely that they were not. The Siq had multiple functions; it was the most direct route of communication eastwards from the town, it held two important aqueducts bringing water from the Wadi Musa spring to the town centre, and it played host to some cults and their religious practices, probably both as part of religious processions and not. To describe it as a 'processional way', then, may overlook the other equally important functions that it served the city's inhabitants.

'High-Places'

The role of 'high-places', that is prominent hilltops that were provided with some kind of religious installation, has a long history in the Near East and such sites continued to be of religious significance in the Roman Period. In Nabataea, we may place Salkhad in the Hauran and Oboda in the Negev, and certainly some of the monuments of Hegra, in this category, but the mountains surrounding Petra's town centre are the best example.[122] Each of the most prominent peaks carried an array of rock-cut monuments that seem to have been intended for rituals and could accommodate a sizable group of worshippers. Fig. 11 shows the layout of the high-places on the four summits to the east of the town centre. We have seen that on top of the most prominent peak to the west of the town centre, the Umm el-Biyara, there was some kind of monumental building, but the function of this is uncertain.[123] There was a small rock-cut sanctuary on the north-western side of this massif, but that is not of the same significance as the other high-places. The topography of the Umm el-Biyara, with a broad plateau at the summit rather than a series of narrower and more defined peaks, may have made it more suitable for a different purpose.

We shall examine perhaps the most prominent, and certainly the most visited, high-place, the Madbah (no. 27 on map 2), to give an impression of the type of monuments found on these summits. As noted above, the Madbah is accessed by two primary routes, one that leaves the Wadi Musa just after the theatre and the other that climbs from the Wadi Farasa East. Another route, which comes from the south and the Chapel of Obodas, is

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[122] For Salkhad see pp. 194–195 below, for Oboda pp. 152–159. A recent study of the high-places of Petra has been undertaken by Zvi Uri Ma'oz (Ma'oz 2008).

[123] See above p. 53, n. 59.

not likely to have been so well-travelled. Before reaching the high-place itself, the route from the Wadi Musa passes by two large obelisks (fig. 12). There have been several suggestions for the function of these impressive monuments.[124] They may have been intended to represent a pair of deities (in the tradition of Petra's many other idol blocks) to whom the Madbah was particularly important. The conical shape of the obelisks, however, more accurately follows that of the numerous *npš* monuments found in Petra, and perhaps these should also be seen as funerary monuments. Another suggestion remarks on numerous quarry marks in the platform around the obelisks, and suggests that the blocks may have been left as an act of contrition towards the gods. Several of Petra's quarries, particularly in the Wadi Siyyagh, have similar shapes carved lightly into the surface where the stone has been removed. The blocks in this case seem to have been used in a monumental construction that precedes the high-place (fig. 13). The function of this is also not known and the building has not been investigated in detail; one suggestion sees it as a monumental propylaeum marking the entrance to the sanctuary area.[125] There is no parallel for these monuments at Petra's other high-places, and so they are poorly understood. We shall see that, although those arrangements categorised as high-places have several points of design in common, they have just as many differences.

The high-place proper of the Madbah (fig. 11.2), past the monumental construction, sits on a peak about sixty metres long and 15 metres wide at its broadest. In the centre is carved a sunken rectangular area, measuring c. 15m x 6m and about 0.4m in depth (fig. 14). A shallow shelf runs around the edge of the rectangle, varying in width and depth, and disappearing on the eastern side. Towards the centre of the area is a very shallow rectangular platform (e on fig. 11.2), which is aligned with a larger platform to the west. This is accessed by a small central stairway and has at its centre a small rectangular recess, which presumably held some kind of object. The platform is surrounded by a small passageway, a feature which appears a number of times in the Nabataean context. To the south of this another small flight of steps leads up to another platform which is equipped with three basins of different shapes and sizes (l, m and n on fig. 11.2). There is a much larger reservoir to the south (p).

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[124] For a full bibliography see Wenning 1987 p. 217 and Kühn 2005 p. 467.

[125] The remains standing today are those of a crusader fortress, but there was probably a Nabataean building nearby.

How this area was used by ancient worshippers remains obscure, and there have been a number of different suggestions. Dalman was clear in his interpretation of the rectangular area: "Der ganze Hof ist somit im Grunde nichts anderes als der Mittelraum eines ungewöhnlich großen Triklinium ums und ist nur deshalb in den Felsen vertieft, damit die Liegeplätze über den Fußboden erhöht wurden".[126] The shallow platform in the centre was intended for offerings, and the large platform to the west an altar. Ma'oz has outlined some difficulties with classifying this as a triclinium, pointing out that there is no consistency in the way the 'benches' are carved around the edges, and suggests that there would have been a low wall running around the edge of the rectangle instead.[127] There is, however, absolutely no trace of this remaining and there are no parallels for such a structure in Petra. The uneven dimensions and layout of the 'benches' may also simply be a result of the natural variations of the rock at the summit. If not a triclinium as such, it at least seems likely that the area was intended to gather a group of worshippers, and perhaps to mark out the sacred area from its surroundings. Equally problematic are the shallow platform at the centre of the area and the larger platforms to the west. Starcky provides a vivid image of how the platform containing the three basins may have been used: "Il semble qu'un chameau ait facilement pu être amené là, le cou tendu au-dessus de la surface de l'autel, creusée en forme de vasque peu profonde". One of the basins on the top of the platform would have been for the blood, the other for water.[128] The other platform, with the central staircase, is interpreted as the *mwtb* ('throne'—see below text 9, l. 3) for holding one or several idol blocks, which could be sprinkled with the blood collected from the sacrifice. Ma'oz sees rather the shallow platform in the centre of the large rectangular sunken area as the support for the idol block, and does not consider it probable that blood sacrifices would have taken place here.[129] The first interpretation seems preferable. The layout of a podium accessed by a narrow flight of steps reminds us of the cult podiums in the temples of Petra's town centre, which were probably intended for idol blocks or a cult image. The exact nature of the sacrifices or rituals that were performed here, however, must remain uncertain.

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126 Dalman 1908 p. 162.
127 Ma'oz 2008 p. 44.
128 Starcky 1966 col. 1008.
129 Ma'oz 2008 p. 25.

Moving away from the Madbah to Petra's other high-places, we shall see that the remains are often more numerous and more complex and therefore even more difficult to interpret. The Madras, for example, like the Madbah seems to have one central and most prominent 'courtyard' area of roughly the same size (no. 68 on fig. 11.1; fig. 15). There is, however, no sign of a large altar platform or cult platform that seems central to the arrangement on the Madbah. The presence of the deities is rather revealed in a row of idol blocks carved into the side of a small massif that faces the platform (70 on fig. 11.1; fig. 16). This arrangement, however, forms only one part of the 'high-place'. Dalman envisages another sanctuary at the 'Sudhof', where a number of niches and a large triclinium surround a natural hollow. Between these, carved into the 'Mittelfelsen', are a number of chambers that were likely used by either one *mrzḥ*' or many.[130] The area was clearly used by a number of different groups in a number of different ways. The same is true of the Ḥubta high-place, to the east of the town centre. This is accessed by one of the widest and best preserved of Petra's processional ways which ascends behind the royal tombs. There are several more routes to the summit, and it is difficult to find one particular focus for rituals there.[131] Fig. 11.4 shows the layout of the numerous different monuments that are carved into the rock here, all concentrated on the westernmost ridge of the massif overlooking the town centre. Three of them (D 763–765), which are carved close together, seem to have been one focal point. Starcky suggests that they were triclinia and "presque sûrement destinées aux repas sacrés".[132] but their layout is certainly not identical. Dalman, on the other hand, identifies two as Felsensäle and the third as a Felsenkammer and concludes that "Ein Triklinium ist nicht erkennbar. Doch könnten die Opfermahle hier stattgefunden haben".[133] Nearby is a smaller but deeper chamber (D 766; fig. 17), with what could be a large idol block carved into its back wall and libation bowls in the floor.[134] Dalman goes on to identify two more 'Felsheiligtümer' nearby, all containing different kinds of monuments. Furthermore, these are only a portion of the religious artefacts on the Ḥubta massif, and there are numerous smaller arrangements of

130 See below p. 78.
131 The access routes are listed by Ma'oz 2008 pp. 13–15.
132 Starcky 1966 col. 1006.
133 Dalman 1908 pp. 335–336.
134 This is at least the interpretation of Starcky 1966 col. 1006. Dalman has a different suggestion: "Hier könnte ein Heiligtumshüter gewohnt haben, wenn nicht Kammer und Vorhof der Aufstellung von Weihgeschenken diente" (Dalman 1908 p. 336).

cultic monuments away from the western ridge.[135] The Nmeir high-place is different still. With a smaller area than the Ḥubta, Dalman could only identify two sanctuaries here.[136] The first, at the southern end of the summit, has as its focus a large cuboid rock carved from the floor, whereas the second has the remains of a monumental building, probably a temple (fig. 11.3).[137]

It is clear, then, that Petra's 'high-places' are all very different collections of monuments. Their categorisation together has perhaps sometimes obscured this. Similarly, their prominent position and high level of preservation may have also led, in one sense at least, to an overstatement of their importance. Healey, for example, suggests that "The implication is of a prominent official cultic performance".[138] There is no sign, however, that these high-places could accommodate large crowds for the kind of public rituals that may have taken place in the temples of the town centre or in the vicinity of the Deir. Another suggestion sees the high-places as divided between different tribes, so that each group could have its own summit.[139] There is no epigraphic evidence, however, to support this type of tribal division in Petra's population, at least not on such a civic scale as is found in Palmyra in the second century AD.[140] There also seems to be sometimes little sign of an overall plan to the high-places, which appear rather to be intended to accommodate a series of smaller groups instead of one large crowd. Rather than official or tribal monuments, then, it may be more appropriate to see Petra's high-places as the result of smaller collective initiatives. This is certainly in line with the numerous triclinia that are found there, and we shall see that there is explicit evidence for the private nature of these on the Madras. We shall also see below that there is often not much difference between the components of the high-places and Petra's other rock-cut sanctuaries; it is only their position that sets them apart. There may be a case, then, for moving our interpretation of the high-places towards these, and there is rarely a suggestion of a public or tribal aspect here.

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135 Lindner 2003 pp. 113–126 is the best guide to these.

136 Dalman 1908 pp. 207–211.

137 Wenning 1987 p. 253.

138 Healey 2001 p. 48.

139 See, for example, Nehmé 1997a p. 1046, where she categorises temples and high-places as public monuments and states: "Ceux-ci résultent non pas d'initiatives individuelles, mais, sinon du pouvoir municipal ou même royal, du moins de clans."

140 For tribes at Palmyra, see Kaizer 2002 pp. 43–51.

Finally, we should mention a feature of the high-places, and indeed some of Petra's other religious monuments, that Ma'oz has most recently drawn attention to. He notes how there is at least one aspect of each of these high-places that is orientated towards the Jebel Harun, Petra's highest mountain.[141] Fig. 18 shows some examples of this, and it certainly seems the case that there was sometimes a desire to align monuments with the Jebel Harun, although this is by no means systematic. Ma'oz interprets this as evidence that the mountain was perceived as the dwelling place of Dushara. While there are many problems with his analysis, it is certainly a phenomenon that requires comment, and a connection between the deity and the mountain seems more than possible.[142] It may be that the remains of the Byzantine monastery near the summit hide evidence of a Nabataean temple or place of pilgrimage, and it was felt important to acknowledge its importance during some rituals.

Rock-Cut Sanctuaries

In this section we shall divide Petra's rock-cut sanctuaries into two categories, based on their location, and give examples of each. Firstly, there are those collections of monuments that are arranged inside wadis and often in naturally sheltered or inaccessible locations. Secondly, there are those sanctuaries which are carved in more visible positions, on the side of Petra's larger massifs or on elevated positions that are less prominent than the 'high-places'. The examples given here will give an impression of each type, but we should always bear in mind that there are many more with many different features. They have in common, however, that they could accommodate similar numbers of worshippers.

The (Lower) Qattar ed-Deir provides one of the best examples of the first type.[143] The gorge is easily accessible from the route up to the Deir plateau. A ledge on one of its walls, just where the gorge begins, carries a series of cult monuments (fig. 19.1 and 19.2). The area is enclosed on either side by the high rock walls and water drips down the rock face at all times

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[141] Ma'oz 2008 p. 3.

[142] *Ibid.* p. 56, for example, claims that "In the Nabataean and Roman periods this mountaintop was 'out-of bounds' to laymen or to all humankind". The results of Finnish excavations in the area, however, show a situation quite different from this. Investigation of the Byzantine monastery on a plateau just below the summit revealed evidence for monumental building in the area in the Nabataean period (Fiema 2004 p. 133), and recent survey work has similarly shown that the mountainsides were being cultivated in the Nabataean period (Lavento *et al.* 2007).

[143] Dalman 1908 pp. 252–255.

of the year. The largest monument is a triclinium with a large recess in its back wall (D 440), which is followed by a series of small niches and idol blocks clustered together in a group (fig. 20). Further in is a series of basins carved into the ground connected by a number of channels. These still collect the water that drips down the rock, and there was clearly a need for water to be available for certain rituals. Above these is carved a slightly larger idol niche containing two blocks, accompanied by inscription no. 8 below which identifies one of them as *mṣb' dy bṣr'*, whom Dalman identifies as the deity of the sanctuary (fig. 21).[144] It seems that the sanctuary would have been used by a small group (the width of the ledge would not allow a large crowd), who would gather in the triclinium and in front of the idol blocks. As to the deities of the sanctuary, only *mṣb' dy bṣr'* is named even though there are a number of idol blocks.

Another good example of this type comes from the other side of Petra in the Sadd al-Maajin.[145] This is an exceptionally narrow and twisting wadi that leads towards the town centre at the northern edge of the Ḥubta massif (fig. 22). Dalman has excellent illustrations of the numerous niches and idol blocks that line the walls of the gorge here, although he perhaps overestimated their number at eighty.[146] Their variety in shape, design and setting is striking. A natural hollow, carved on all sides with niches, could have provided a focus point for rituals, and would have been able to accommodate a small group of worshippers (fig. 23). Nearby triclinia attest to the same kind of ritual activities as those that took place in the Qattar ed-Deir. Inscriptions from the site name Dushara (no. 11 below) and al-'Uzza (no. 17 below), but neither of these takes the form of a dedication. Roche attempts to find further deities from the iconography of some of the niches, but this is problematic given the enormous variety of forms here.[147] She does, however, mention the winter rains that rush through this very narrow gorge, meaning that the niches are all carved high up on the wall to avoid damage. Like the Qattar ed-Deir, then, there is a connection to water, and this is a theme that reoccurs frequently all over Petra. Wherever water is present, either emerging from a spring, flowing in a

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[144] *Ibid*. p. 254.

[145] *Ibid*. pp. 308–314.

[146] Roche 1989 p. 327: "le chiffre est sans doute un peu élevé, car la distinction entre une niche très érodée et certaines cavités naturelles est parfois delicate; néanmoins leur nombre est plus grand que les trente niches mentionnées par le Dr. Lindner." See also Wenning 2001a p. 79 for the numbers of niches in the eastern parts of Petra, including the Sadd al-Maajin.

[147] Roche 1989 pp. 332–334.

wadi or collecting in a cistern, it often seems to have been important to mark the spot with a religious monument.[148]

Of the second type of rock-cut sanctuary, those arranged in prominent positions, there is a particularly compact example surviving on the Jebel el-Meisrah (fig. 24).[149] This small massif was accessed by two stairways, one at the western side (a on fig. 25) and another more complex stairwell on the eastern side (m). Both are now much eroded and damaged, but the summit is still just accessible from the western staircase. Here there are a number of monuments which seem to have been intended to accommodate a small group for feasting or some other rituals (fig. 25). Dalman envisaged animal sacrifice here, seeing a cuboid rock (c) as an altar, and even a small hole carved through the rock as a loop for tying the victim (e). This seems possible as the rock (c) would certainly be an unusually squat shape if it were to be categorised as an idol block. The other monuments of the summit included basins (g, h), a small niche (f) and benches (d, l). As with the other rock-cut sanctuaries, only a relatively small crowd could be accommodated here at any one time. We should mention here a comment of Nehmé, who considers that this arrangement was carved on the roof of a house, and so makes a link with the account of Strabo discussed above.[150] There is a large chamber carved in the western side of the massif, and presumably as it contains no cultic monument it is labelled as domestic. This seems unlikely since the area around the massif contains a number of niches with idol blocks, and there is a triclinium next door to the supposed domestic chamber. The impression is of a much larger cultic complex with the top of the massif as its focal point. In any case, the exposed location away from any water source may be considered an unsuitable place for a house.

A second example of this type of sanctuary can be found behind the theatre (fig. 26).[151] At least two rock-cut routes, much like the 'processional ways' giving access to Petra's high-places, lead towards this area past a number of niches and religious monuments. The 'sanctuary', if indeed it should be termed as such, has as its focus a large open-air triclinium with a basin set at the end of one of its benches (D 202a). Further basins are carved into the tops of two small outcrops nearby the triclinium (D 203 and 205), and to the north are the traces of a highly unusual small square

148 The religious significance of water at Petra is discussed below p. 86.
149 Dalman 1908 pp. 285–287.
150 Nehmé 1997a p. 1025. For Strabo see above pp. 23–28.
151 Dalman 1908 p. 184.

monument that had three small bowls on one of its sides (D 204, fig. 27). Of this, Dalman considered "Man hat doch wohl anzunehmen, daß die Opfermahlgäste des Trikliniums hier zu opfern und zu spenden pflegten", but there is no sign of an altar.[152] Nehmé categorises this arrangement among her "hauts-lieux de terrasses intermédiaires", which contain similar elements to the better-known high-places but are distinguished by their less pronounced topographical position and the absence of a processional way. The paths leading up behind the theatre, however, certainly seem to be punctuated with monuments in a similar manner to those leading to the high-places. The distinction, therefore, may not be so obvious. It is difficult to see, for example, how the arrangements on the summit of the Ḥubta massif differ from this one behind the theatre, apart from the topographical position. As we have seen, the Ḥubta 'high-place' seems to have no central focus, and it should perhaps rather be interpreted as a series of smaller arrangements of the type we find here behind the theatre. There was clearly a desire for a prominent position, and the wide space on top of the Ḥubta allowed for a greater number of monuments, but there seem to be no fundamental differences in how they were used. They both seem intended for fairly small groups of worshippers, and so are both placed in the same category here as collective monuments.

While all these rock-cut sanctuaries seem to have been intended for similar small groups of worshippers, we have little idea of how they may have been organised among the population. Nehmé suggests that the 'hauts-lieux de terrasses intermédiaires' would have served a group of people living in the same place, and so played the same role as the high-places but on a more local level. Other sanctuaries may have been devoted to a particular deity, and would have collected worshippers from different social groups all over Petra.[153] The epigraphic evidence is unfortunately too limited to confirm such divisions. Some of the inscriptions catalogued below are from these sanctuaries and do mention deities, for example no. 8 from the Qattar ed-Deir is attached to one of the most prominent monuments there. The place may therefore have held some special significance for a cult attached to the *mṣb' dy bṣr'*, but we can say no more than this.

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[152] *Ibid.*
[153] Nehmé 1997a p. 1047.

Private Monuments

This section brings together the monuments and artefacts that reveal a more restricted layer of religious practice at Petra, and that we can more confidently describe as being primarily private concerns. We certainly have epigraphic evidence for smaller social units at Petra. Many of the inscriptions catalogued below, and those found elsewhere in Nabataea, are the result of religious initiatives undertaken by "the sons of" (*bny*) a certain ancestor. It is sometimes unclear exactly what kind of unit *bny* refers to. At Palmyra, where there are far more inscriptions using this terminology, it seems to have worked on different levels. Firstly, as a way of defining family units which had a genealogical relationship and secondly as a way of marking out larger 'tribal' groups which probably shared no genealogical link.[154] At Petra, there is no sign of the same group '*bny x*' appearing regularly, which may hint at the use of the term to define a broad group, and so the evidence can only show us that it was used here in the first sense, to define family groups. We shall see that this familial layer of worship can be found in a number of different monuments. We shall also see that there is evidence of small groups defined along professional lines gathering for rituals, but the terminology of these groups is not clear.

Triclinia

We have seen above that triclinia, both enclosed and open-air, held a central position in many of Petra's sanctuaries. Tarrier puts their number in Petra at one hundred and twenty.[155] As well as forming a part of sanctuaries, some seem to be attached to domestic arrangements. Others, as we shall see below, are found in connection with tombs, and others still seem more isolated. The presence of a deity is often revealed by a niche at the centre of the rear wall, and occasionally there are bowls carved beneath this or other cultic installations that further suggest a religious function.

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[154] Note also Kaizer 2002 p. 215: "Due to the still limited knowledge of Palmyrene terminology, one cannot exclude either that some of the names of groups which are known only from the tesserae, and which have too readily been explained as family names, actually denote professional associations."

[155] Tarrier 1995 p. 166. For triclinia in Petra see in general Tarrier 1988.

The Chapel of Obodas, recently excavated by a French team, provides a good example of triclinia as essential parts of a sanctuary.[156] This is a collection of chambers and monuments that sits in a small valley behind the Jebel en-Nmeir (fig. 28.1 and 28.2). At the centre lies a large triclinium with an idol niche in the middle of its back wall (fig. 29). Inscription no. 5 below, from this chamber, informs us that we are on the 'terrace of Peṭamun' and provides the link with Obodas. The complex is accessed from the south by a narrow rock-cut corridor which forms the last part of a processional way, dotted occasionally with niches, leading up from the wadi below. After the entrance a number of niches and basins are encountered, and then a smaller triclinium (D 291) that faces towards the larger. Further along the rock face are two more chambers, and then a biclinium (N19 on fig. 28.1) on a smaller detached massif. Clearly, then, a number of banquets could have been held here simultaneously, or several different groups could have had their own spaces. Nehmé envisages an area controlled by the family detailed in text no. 5 below, who at that point are adding Obodas to their sanctuary.[157] The mention of the deity *dwtr*' shows that other gods were worshipped here, and this may also be indicated by the number of idol blocks. We can perhaps therefore envisage a large family, to whom Obodas was particularly important, gathering here and conducting a variety of different rituals.

There is also a temptation to link the Chapel of Obodas with the only other mention of the god from Petra (no. 19 below), which also shows that there was a *mrzḥ*' devoted to him in the city. The text comes from the opposite side of the site, however, and there is no evidence for a *mrzḥ*' near the chapel. The only other mention of a *mrzḥ*' in Petra comes from text no. 21, where it is shown that they were presided over by a *rb*. Nothing else is known of their internal organisation. We can guess from the size of Petra's triclinia as to the number of individuals gathering for any one meal, and the lists of names that can be found in a number of chambers must record the names of the participants. It is not always clear along what lines these groups were organised, and the two published inscriptions mentioning them give us no help. Unpublished texts from the Madras, however, seem to suggest that at least some were organised along professional lines as a

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[156] Dalman 1908 pp. 212–214; Nehmé 2002; Tholbecq and Durand 2005 and Tholbecq *et al.* 2008.

[157] Nehmé 2002 p. 255: "Il me semble cependant que l'expression 'les fils de', ici comme ailleurs en nabatéen, est à prendre au sens littéral, 'les enfants de (non expressément nommés)', plutôt que 'le tribu de'".

gathering point for practitioners of particular skills or trades.[158] This is in line with what we know of similar organisations elsewhere in the Near East and Mediterranean.[159] The mention of the *mrzḥ*' dedicated to the god Obodas suggests it is also possible that they could also have been focussed on a particular deity, and we similarly find a group devoted to Dushara at Oboda in the Negev.[160]

Like many other areas of the Near East and Mediterranean, then, gathering together in small groups and sharing a meal was clearly an important social process. Such a mechanism would have been central in reinforcing social bonds, redistributing goods and providing a shared sense of identity. The physical remains clearly show that deities played an important part in this at Petra. Remains and inscriptions from other parts of the kingdom reveal a similar picture in many areas, and the religious and social significance of this will be discussed further below.[161] For the moment we should emphasise their role as private religious monuments, the responsibility of small groups organised along familial or professional lines.

Tombs

Petra's tombs must also be seen as primarily private monuments that were owned and maintained by families. Such a situation is made explicit at Hegra, where many of the tombs carry long inscriptions detailing their ownership and conditions of use.[162] Texts, however, are almost entirely absent from the facades of Petra's tombs, and this has been the object of much discussion.[163] It has been suggested that they were written in paint or some other medium which has not survived the centuries, or fixed on plaques which have since been removed, but the facades do not provide any hint that such a system was adopted. Gawlikowski argues that there was a religious ban on founders inscribing their names on the tombs, but there are several examples of personal names found inside the tombs and one on the exterior.[164] After analysing the epigraphic evidence from the

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158 See Nehmé 1997a p. 1047 where she mentions that unpublished inscriptions from chambers on the Madras reveal this type of organisation: "deux sont composés d'esclaves, un de scribes, un autre d'ouvriers et un dernier enfin de militaries."

159 See, for example, Healey 2001 pp. 165–169.

160 See below pp. 153–154.

161 See below pp. 232–233.

162 See below pp. 133–139.

163 A summary of this debate is given in Nehmé 2003b pp. 248–255.

164 The inscriptions from inside the tomb are collected in Nehmé 2003b. For the arguments of Gawlikowski see Gawlikowski 1975–1976. The tomb explicitly naming its owner comes from the Bab as-Siq (Milik 1976; *IGLS* XXI: IV 54; *Quellen* pp. 222–224).

tombs, Nehmé argues that they should not be described as 'anonymous', as there are several texts inside naming the occupants. She considers that the differences between Petra and Hegra are probably the result of different legal or administrative practices, or Hegra's position on the border of Nabataea.[165] This analysis seems for the moment preferable. In any case, regardless of why they did not carry inscriptions, Petra's tombs must have been operated by individual families. Inscription no. 10 below, although one of only a very few texts from the tombs, seems to make that clear enough.[166]

Today the tombs stand alone lining the hillsides around the town centre, but excavations have revealed that in antiquity some may have formed only part of larger built complexes with many functions. The buildings in the Wadi Farasa East are the only such arrangement to have been studied in detail. A plan of the area was first made by the Deutsch-türkische Denkmalschutz-Kommando, and this has recently been updated and developed by an ongoing series of excavations led by Stephan Schmid (fig. 30).[167] Two rock-cut chambers, the Soldier Tomb and a triclinium opposite, are linked by a large colonnaded courtyard surrounded by a number of chambers. The entire complex was constructed in the second or third quarter of the first century AD. The excavators frequently note the similarities to

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[165] Nehmé 2003b pp. 252–255. She begins from a suggestion of Khairy who considered that Hegra's insecure position, right at the limit of Nabataean control, necessitated that these legal provisions be carved on stone (Khairy 1980 p. 165). She draws attention to the number of inscriptions at Hegra that record an individual as having taken possession of a space (see below p. 142), and suggests a less efficient local administration than that of Petra may have resulted in owners marking their possessions in this way.

[166] We should keep in mind, however, that the tomb texts at Hegra, although attached to private monuments, were legal documents intended for a public audience. There also may be some exceptions to the private ownership of tombs at Petra. The Turkmaniyeh Tomb is the only façade to carry a long Nabataean text (no. 9 below), distinguishing it from Petra's other tombs, but it does not name an owner. As the tomb is recorded as being "sacred and dedicated to Dushara", it has been suggested that the structure was owned by a temple of Dushara in Petra (Healey 1993 p. 239). It is also possible that some of the larger tombs had a public element. They may have been home to deceased kings and public rituals commemorating them. We have seen above that the Deir has been seen in this light (pp. 62–66), but the Khazneh may be the best example. No inscription links it to the royal family, but its size and prominent position have led many to suggest that it was the tomb of a king, usually either Obodas III or Aretas IV. Recent excavations in front of the façade uncovered a courtyard with a small altar and other evidence of ritual practice (Farajat and Nawafleh 2005). However, such tombs, which had a significance to the population as a whole rather than to individual families, must have been the exception rather than the rule.

[167] Brief excavation reports and a bibliography of the International Wadi Farasa Project can be found on their website: http://www.auac.ch/iwfp/index.html.

be found here with the luxury architecture of villas and palaces elsewhere in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. Although the functions of many of the built chambers cannot be easily ascertained, it seems likely that they provided living space or at least were used by the living, as is shown by the triclinium.[168] Investigations are now beginning on other such complexes, and we shall soon be provided with a better idea of their components and uses. For now, we can state that the family would be able to gather here and hold a ritual feast in honour and in the presence of their deceased relatives. The numerous triclinia associated with tombs all over Petra attest that this was a common practice.

Dagmar Kühn has analysed the role that 'Totengedenken' played in Petra's society.[169] The presence of the dead in Petra is revealed not only in the prominence of the tombs, but also in the hundreds of *npš* monuments lining the wadis. These are narrow pyramidal monuments that, like idol blocks, could be incised in the rock face or carved to protrude out of it. They could be carved singly or in groups, and occasionally were accompanied by an inscription naming the deceased person they were commemorating.[170] They were also sometimes accompanied with cultic installations, particularly donation bowls. The same is true of Petra's many shaft tombs. These have received less attention than the tomb facades, but they appear in great numbers all over the site. Clearly, then, rituals of remembrance, which involved pouring some kind of liquid, were carried out here by relatives of the deceased. Keeping alive the memory of the dead and providing them a place in the society of the living was an important part of Petra's social patterns. Indeed, Kühn chooses to analyse Petra and Nabataea as they provide so much material for comparative purposes with the Old Testament.[171] More importantly for us, she draws attention to two ways in which the deities were involved in this process.

The first and clearest function of the deities in relation to the dead was their protection. We shall see that this is made most clear at Hegra, where the deities are called on in the tomb inscriptions to protect the

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[168] This is discussed in Schmid 2001b pp. 182–188. He concludes: "the resting place of the dead is combined with installations for the *symposia* of the living, and in the background appear the—temporary—living quarters".

[169] Kühn 2005.

[170] *Ibid.* pp. 238, 29 of the 168 (16%) monuments counted at Petra are accompanied with a text.

[171] *Ibid.* p. 31: "Die Wahl der nabatäischen Kultur ergibt sich vornehmlich aus der Tatsache, dass den Nabatäern die Toten allgegenwärtig waren, wie es inbesondere in der Hauptstadt Petra für jeden Besucher auf Schritt und Tritt einsichtig wird."

deceased inside and punish anyone who might mistreat them.[172] At Petra, although Dushara plays a role in the maintenance of the Turkmaniyeh Tomb (no. 9 below), this role is not so explicit.[173] However, the association of idol blocks with tombs seems to reveal a similar process. The best example of this comes from the so called 'Triple-Dushara Complex' on the lower reaches of the Jebel el-Meisrah (D 514).[174] This contains a number of graves in the floor, including three side by side against the back wall. Above them, at the head of each grave, is carved a rectangular idol block within a niche (fig. 31). A smaller chamber nearby holds a similar arrangement. Clearly, the intention was to place the deceased under the protection of the deity represented by the idol block. The connection with Dushara is merely conventional. Kühn considers Dushara to have been the most likely candidate to undertake the role, but also suggests 'Familienschutzgottheiten' may have played a part, given that the care of the dead was largely a family matter.[175]

The second possible function for the deities in this sphere, which suggests quite a different relationship with the dead, is illustrated by Kühn with regards to the series of monuments around the Aṣlaḥ Triclinium in the Bab as-Siq (below text no. 1).[176] Recent excavations have revealed that there was also a built element to this complex, but the interpretation of this is still in its preliminary stages.[177] The focal point of the complex is a small massif carved with a number of niches and chambers, the largest of which is the Aṣlaḥ Triclinium (fig. 32).[178] There are a number of cisterns, niches and shaft tombs in the surrounding area. Dalman noted, considering the evidence for a large number of burials, the sepulchral character of the sanctuary.[179] Merklein preferred to see two phases to the sanctuary, in keeping with the two phases of inscription no. 1 below. It had firstly served

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[172] See below pp. 133–139.

[173] Although note the several texts above of the formula "be remembered *x* before *d*", where *d* is the name of a deity (nos 11, 12, 13, 14 and 20 below). The attachment of similar texts to *npš* monuments may suggest that these were sometimes intended to commemorate the deceased as well as the living (Kühn 2005 pp. 250–252).

[174] See also Dalman 1912 pp. 32–33; Horsfield 1938 pp. 108–111; Kühn 2005 pp. 68–69.

[175] Kühn 2005 pp. 64–65.

[176] *Ibid.* pp. 70–73.

[177] Gorgerat and Wenning 2010.

[178] For a description of the central triclinium and an interpretation of its religious monuments, see Wenning 2003a pp. 151–153.

[179] Dalman 1908 p. 107: "Grabkammern (Nr. 24, 26 Br.) und eine auffallend große Zahl von Senkgräbern in dieser Gegend beweisen den sepulkralen Charakter des Heiligtums."

as a burial place, and only later was the cultic space added.[180] Clearly, regardless of how the complex developed, at some point both the cultic and funerary elements would have been in use, and most probably in relation to each other. Kühn therefore concludes that "Das sogenannte Bab es-Siq-Heiligtum bietet in diesem Verständnis ein einmaliges Beispiel der Zusammengehörigkeit von Lebenden und Toten in kultischen Feiern zu Ehren eines Gottes", and considers that the dead would have been involved here in banquets in honour of Dushara and the king.[181]

It seems, then, that we may have evidence for something more than Totengedenken at Petra. Alongside the living, the gods are certainly involved in the care of the dead, but it seems also that the dead may have been involved in the care of the gods. The multitude of religious and cultic monuments arranged in direct connection with tombs and other funerary installations certainly hints at some interaction between these three spheres. We can state more confidently that these would have been primarily family matters. As we shall see below, the importance of familial or personal interpretations of the divine sphere is also revealed elsewhere in Petra's religious monuments.

Idol Blocks

We have seen that idol blocks formed a part of nearly every kind of cult monument at Petra.[182] They appear in a huge variety of forms, contexts and groups from every part of the city. Studies of them have generally been concerned with finding their identity and fitting shapes to particular divine characters. This method of analysis inevitably simplifies the material, and it may be preferable rather to lay emphasis on the variety of forms and what this reveals of a strong individual element to the interpretation of Petra's deities.[183]

The same can sometimes be said of their context. While most of Petra's idol blocks appear in groups, some can be found in very isolated positions with or without other cultic monuments. A good example is a very narrow fissure in the mountainside some way to the south of the Chapel of Obodas (fig. 33).[184] Two very narrow stairways lead up to two levels within

[180] Merklein 1995 p. 110.

[181] Kühn 2005 p. 73.

[182] For general studies of Petra's idol blocks see Wenning 2001a and 2008; Avner 1999–2000; Patrich 1990; Merklein and Wenning 1998b.

[183] Alpass 2010 pp. 109–112.

[184] This may be marked somewhere on the section of the map of Nehmé shown in Nehmé 2002 p. 244, but as far as I know is not described anywhere else.

this. On the first, there is a roughly carved narrow empty niche with what may be a large basin and a channel below. Further in, on the second level, is a small pair of idol blocks carved without a niche. As already discussed, water may be an important factor here, given that it seems to be present throughout the year. The context of the idol blocks somewhat prohibits us from labelling the place a 'sanctuary'. There are no other monuments nearby, and only a handful of people could fit into the space at any one time. Like the Chapel of Obodas, it perhaps seems best to interpret this kind of arrangement as a family monument, but this time for a much smaller group. It is typical of numerous small arrangements of monuments from all parts of the site which were clearly intended to accommodate only a very small number of worshippers, and seem best explained by a familial layer of worship at Petra. Such a layer can also best explain the variety of Petra's idol blocks. As Nehmé notes, even where these are collected in large groups, each dedicant may well have been addressing the deity of his or her choice.[185] They are therefore the result of individual initiatives and personal interpretations of the gods.

Figurines

Figurines have often been overlooked in studies of religion in Petra and Nabataea. This is partly because they are less visible and numerous than the rock-cut monuments. Partly, however, it is because their anthropomorphic forms do not sit comfortably within the predominantly geometric and 'aniconic' cult landscape of Petra. Scholars have therefore tended to either overlook them, or dismiss them as something that is not properly 'Nabataean' or the result of a 'Nabataean religious tradition'.[186] More recent work, however, has given figurines their proper place in scholarship, and a wide range of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic types have been catalogued from Petra.[187] Their chronology is difficult to establish, largely because of the lack of contextual archaeological information. Occasionally, however, it has been possible to associate them with other finds, and from this it has become clear that they were being produced in the Nabataean period and for a long time afterwards.[188] Furthermore,

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[185] Nehmé 1997a pp. 1037 and 1047.

[186] See, for example, Patrich 1990 p. 113 where he claims that figurines were used by those who "did not strictly adhere to the desert traditions". Mettinger similarly downplays the importance of figurines, arguing that they are only the "quasi-subject" of a cult (Mettinger 1995 p. 27).

[187] See particularly el-Khouri 2002 and Tuttle 2009, but also note Parlasca 1990.

[188] el-Khouri 2002 pp. 35–40; Tuttle 2009 pp. 233–240.

stylistic analysis has shown that there developed a distinctive local style which was marked out by certain characteristic features, although this was coupled with iconography recognisable from the wider Hellenistic and Roman worlds.[189] There is no reason, then, to divorce them from Petra's other religious artefacts, and they should be seen as forming as much a part of any 'Nabataean religious tradition' as any of Petra's monuments.

Figurines had a wide variety of uses, the majority of which were connected with the religious world. They were produced as replicas of deities, given as dedications, used for private worship, kept for their apotropaic powers, used in funerary rites and magic, as well as holding many other functions. Tuttle discusses these in the context of the Nabataean examples, and attempts to assign particular functions to particular models.[190] It seems clear that some of the figurines from Petra were intended to represent deities. The best example must be the seated enthroned female figures, which are often labelled as Isis by scholars.[191] She sometimes wears the distinctive *basileion* on her head, and the pose of an enthroned draped figure is paralleled by the statue in the Wadi Siyyagh which is specifically identified as Isis (no. 2 below, fig. 34). Beyond this, however, iconographical parallels from Petra are not forthcoming, and it becomes very difficult to accurately ascribe identities to the figurines. What is clearer is that they give us a rare insight into personal piety.[192] El-Khouri lists the different locations where they have been found in the city, and most seem to have originated from a domestic context.[193] Unlike the majority of Petra's cult monuments, they were not intended to be used by groups but had primarily a personal significance. Whereas the monuments above illustrate the familial layer of worship at Petra, then, the figurines move us

[189] el-Khouri 2002 p. 47: "In general, the terracotta figurines of Petra are evidence of the wide cultural connections of the Nabataeans with Hellenistic Greece, Egypt, Parthia and southern Arabia. They are also evidence of a personal and genuine character of the Nabataean craftsmen, which can be easily identified through their unique style and form and this might be characterised as, in most of them, what can be called, a local style of art".

[190] Tuttle 2009 pp. 243–314.

[191] See el-Khouri 2002 pp. 9–11 and Tuttle 2009 pp. 147–148 and pp. 160–161. El-Khouri is keen to identify most of the enthroned draped female figures as Isis, but Tuttle is rightly more cautious and withholds the identification as a goddess unless specific iconographical elements are present.

[192] E.g. Tuttle 2009 p. 256: "Figurines are considered generally to have functioned in the sphere of personal usage rather than corporate or civic . . . In this respect, these coroplastic objects are virtually unique in the extant archaeological record of Nabataea."

[193] See the catalogue in el-Khouri 2002 pp. 91–101.

to an even smaller scale and reveal the practices and beliefs of worshippers as individuals.

Conclusions

Before we conclude, it is important to reiterate three points regarding this survey of Petra's religious life. Firstly, although we have an abundance of rock-cut monuments that allow us an insight into the context of worship, the lack of inscriptions sometimes makes them frustratingly unintelligible. We can reconstruct the size of the groups that used Petra's many sanctuaries with some confidence, and put forward suggestions as to along what lines they may have been organised, but there is little information on how they were used. The exact forms of the rituals, the cult personnel involved, the particular festivals that were undoubtedly celebrated, the deities that were venerated, and many other aspects of worship that we would like to investigate, are more often than not irretrievable. Secondly, it should be emphasised that only a small fraction of Petra's religious monuments are described here. Those that are included should provide an impression of the most common types of sanctuary and monument found in the city. However, there are just as many differences as similarities within these categories. Each sanctuary, particularly at Petra where they are so closely linked to the topographic circumstances, is installed within a unique context with a unique set of monuments, and this must have somehow affected religious experience. Thirdly, although the sacred space has been categorised here into three different types, with examples and subtypes in each, we should by no means imagine this division as static or exclusive; it is merely a broad framework that can encompass most of Petra's monuments. A detailed look at many, as we see with the plateau behind the Deir, can provide contradictory explanations for the way they were used. Alongside the inadequacy of the evidence, this must reflect the multi-functionality of Petra's sacred spaces; they could be used in many different ways by different groups, and we must be careful that categorising them in the above manner does not simplify such complex situations.

There are some features, however, that do emerge with some consistency and deserve further comment. Firstly, the role and prominence of water in religious practices and beliefs is a theme that emerges at all corners of the site. The hydraulic expertise of the Nabataeans and their careful management of the water sources around Petra have received

much recent attention.[194] During this, the placing of religious monuments nearby water sources, aqueducts, cisterns and channels has often been noted, and it seems clear that there was a desire to place the water supply under the protection of the gods.[195] The arranging of certain sanctuaries (e.g. in the Qattar ed-Deir above) nearby water sources may also reflect a similar desire. However, the multitude of basins found within sanctuaries makes it clear that water could perform sacred functions in Nabataea, and this may partly explain why so many were laid out near water supplies. We should also note that there are many examples of such arrangements away from water, and there is no systematic marking of water with religious installations. Indeed, there is as yet no sign that the most impressive display of water at Petra, the pool-complex in the town centre, was associated with any religious monuments. The idea that water was 'sacred' to the Nabataeans, then, cannot be maintained.

Finally, despite the limitations noted above, we shall see that the remains from Petra allow us a deeper insight into the social patterns of worship than anywhere else in Nabataea. The monuments surviving reveal the religious practices of a number of different social groups, from the large public temples of the town centre to an isolated idol block high in the surrounding mountains. Nowhere else in Nabataea, apart from to some extent at Hegra, can we reconstruct such an exhaustive model. Elsewhere, our evidence is largely limited to monumental sanctuaries and temples, but these only form part of the picture at Petra. Its inhabitants' use of their surroundings to provide an apparatus for rituals and to leave a permanent mark of their piety is particularly valuable in allowing us an insight into the beliefs and practices of smaller and more restricted social groups. It is on this level that the variety among Petra's monuments most clearly comes to the fore, revealing a multitude of different interpretations of the city's divine inhabitants. If only the temples had survived, this aspect to the city's religious life would have remained hidden, and this should serve as a reminder of how much has been lost elsewhere in Nabataea.

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[194] See Gunsam 1989; al-Muheisen and Tarrier 2001–2002; Ruben 2003; Ortloff 2005; Oleson 2007; Bellwand 2007; Dentzer 2008; Schmid 2008a.

[195] See, for example, the analysis of religious monuments along the Siq in Ruben 2003 and their connection with the water supply. Two aqueducts move along the passage, one on either wall, carrying water from the Wadi Musa spring to the town centre.

Appendix: Catalogue of Inscriptions

This is not a comprehensive catalogue of texts from Petra, and will include only those that can help us to form a picture of religious patterns and beliefs in the city.[196] Although our topic here is the Nabataean period, it will be necessary to include some texts from a later date, as they may have some relevance to the earlier period. The texts will be presented in chronological order, as far as this can be ascertained.[197] Each text is preceded by a brief introduction and bibliography, and followed by a commentary only of the most relevant points:

1.

96 BC or c. 62 BC. Neatly inscribed in the centre at the top of the rear wall of the Aṣlaḥ Triclinium in the Bab as-Siq. The text is well preserved and so there are few issues with the reading. A niche is carved beneath, near ground level, and the benches running around the walls reveal the chamber's function as a triclinium.

Dalman 1912 no. 90; *RES* 1432; Cantineau 1932 pp. 2–3; Dijkstra 1995 pp. 50–53; Yardeni 2000 A 306, B [99]; *Quellen* pp. 219–220; Healey 2009 no. 2.

1. *'ln ṣryḥy' wgb' zy 'bd 'ṣlḥ br 'ṣlḥ*
2. *dnh ṣryḥ' dy 'bd 'ṣlḥ br 'ṣlḥ*
3. *ldwšr' 'lh mnbtw 'l ḥyy 'bdt mlk*
4. *nbṭw br ḥrtt mlk nbṭw šnt I*

These are the chambers and the reservoir that *'ṣlḥ* son of *'ṣlḥ* made.

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[196] The *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* (pt. 2 tom. 1 for Petra) still presents the most comprehensive attempt to gather together Petra's Nabataean texts. Throughout the twentieth century, however, more and more texts have been added, and a new catalogue is badly needed.

[197] It should be noted that the cataloguing of the Greek texts after the Nabataean texts is based only on their language, and not necessarily chronology. A bilingual Greek-Nabataean text from the Bab as-Siq, probably dating to the reign of Malichus II (AD 40–70), shows that Greek was in use in the city in the Nabataean period (Milik 1976 pp. 143–152; *Quellen* pp. 222–224; *IGLS* XXI: IV 54). That the use of Nabataean continued into the Roman period is shown by two texts. One may be dated to 'the sixth year of the province' (AD 111/112: Savignac 1906 p. 594) and another to 'the twenty first year of the Eparchy' (AD 126/127: no. 20 l. 5–6 below).

This is the chamber that *'ṣlḥ* son of *'ṣlḥ* made for Dushara, the god of *mnbtw*, for the life of Obodat, king of the Nabataeans, son of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, year I.

1: *ṣryḫy'*, chambers: there is a rock-cut chamber on either side of the triclinium, as well as a number of niches nearby. See p. 82 above for more detail.

1–2: The first line of the inscription may be earlier than the rest. L. 1 uses *zy* for the relative pronoun, which is thought to be earlier than the *dy* of l. 2 (see Cantineau 1932 p. 3).

3: *mnbtw*: the personal name could also be *mnktw* (Savignac 1913 p. 441, n. 1 and Starcky 1956 p. 523, n. 3). The absence of a medial *k* from the rest of the text makes this problem difficult to solve. Milik's suggestion (in Starcky 1956) of *mlktw* is not as probable. The *l* and *n* are clearly distinguishable elsewhere.
'bdt mlk nbṭw: this could refer to Obodas I or II, as both followed an Aretas, hence the discrepancy in the date. The palaeographic arguments tend to favour the earlier king (Fiema and Jones 1990 p. 244).

2.

26/25 BC. Inscribed on either side of a niche holding the image of a seated goddess, whom the inscription identifies as Isis. Three other niches are arranged alongside, all on a narrow ledge high up on the northern side of the Wadi Siyyagh before it opens out into the town centre (fig. 34). A larger plateau below is carved with more cultic installations, and may have been used for larger groups of worshippers (see Merklein and Wenning 1998a and 2001). The text is arranged on either side of the niche as shown below.

Milik and Starcky 1975 pp. 120–124; Donner 1995 p. 12; Merklein and Wenning 1998a pp. 167–168; Healey 2001 p. 138; *Quellen* pp. 256–257.

1.	*. . .] 'lht'*	*bḥd b'yr*
2.	*d' 'sy*	*bšnt*
3.	*dy 'bdw bny br*	*ḥmš*
4.	*h[. . .]qywm'*	*l] 'bdt*
5.	*w[. . .*	*mlk*

. . . goddess that is Isis which the sons of *br* . . . of *qywm'* . . . and . . . made / on the first of Iyyar in the fifth year of Obodat the king.

1: The first three characters are uncertain. The most likely reconstruction is *dnh 'lht'*, 'this is the goddess Isis', as many texts begin with the demonstrative pronoun.

2: *'sy*: the form of the divine name is paralleled in Aramaic, but not in Nabataea (see Healey 2001 p. 138). Isis may appear in a Greek text from the el-Madras, but the restorations are very doubtful and disputed (*IGLS* XXI: IV 31).

2–3: *bšnt ḥmš [l]'bdt mlk*, fifth year of Obodat the king: the dating formula is not unambiguous, as there were three kings with the name Obodat. Obodat II reigned for less than five years, so he can be discounted. Milik and Starcky note several palaeographical features that favour the later king (p. 121), and this is more in line with the date when most of our material from Petra starts to appear.

4–5: Milik and Starcky restored the personal names *bny brhbl br qymw' w . . . br tym'*, but Merklein and Wenning could not follow much of this.

3.

AD 2/3. Found in a secondary context during the excavation of the Petra Church. The text is in a number of fragments which can be fitted together to produce the following reading.

Bowersock and Jones in Fiema *et al.* 2001 pp. 346–349.

1. *. . .]' dy 'bd ḥlp'l' [br. . .*
2. *w'lw [t]yṭr' ldwšr[' w. . .*
3. *[by]rḥ ṭ[b]t bšnt 'šrwḥdh*
4. *lḥrtt mlk nbṭw rḥm 'mh*

. . . that *ḥlp'l'* son of . . . made, and these are the *theatron* to Dushara and . . . in the month of Ṭebet in the eleventh year of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people.

1: What exactly Ḥalpala constructed is unfortunately missing. Jones suggests *rb't'* (shrine), but admits this is tentative, and it is not included in Bowersock's reappraisal of the text. We may make an equally tentative suggestion of *byrt'*, which is found in a text from Sia that records the dedication of the temple of Baalshamin and also contains mention of a *tyṭr'*. There, *byrt'* seems to refer to the temple proper and *tyṭr'* to an open square courtyard in front of it (see below p. 182)

2: *[t]yṭr' ldwšr['*, *theatron* to Dushara: the identification of this building in Petra has been the object of much discussion. In the text from Sia, *tyṭr'* seems to refer to an open square courtyard in front of the temple. Jones suggests a comparison with the temenos of the Qasr el-Bint, but we have seen that the current form of this dates from well after AD 2/3. Joukowsky and Basile prefer

rather to see a reference to the small theatre that was built inside the 'Great Temple' (Joukowsky and Basile 2001 pp. 54–57). Given insufficient parallels for establishing a precise meaning for *tytr'*, and the fact that this inscription has clearly been moved from its original location, we should for the moment refrain from attaching it to any building.

4.

AD 15/16. Found on a limestone block in the Wadi Musa area, but unfortunately not in its original context. The text is of particular interest for the information it gives us on the Nabataean royal family. The reading below follows that of Healey 2009.

Khairy 1981; Dijkstra 1995 pp. 55–57; *Quellen* pp. 274–278; Healey 2009 no. 3.

1. *. . .] dy [. . .] lb'šmyn 'lh mnkw [. . . 'l]*
2. *[ḥyy ḥrtt] mlk nbṭw rḥm 'mh w'l ḥyy šqylt 'ḥth mlkt nbṭ[w]*
3. *[w'l ḥyy] mnkw w'bdt wrb'l wpṣ'l wš'dt bnyhm w'l ḥyy šqyl[t]*
4. *['ntt mnkw] br ḥrtt mlk nbṭw rḥm 'mh w'l ḥyy gmlt mlk[t]*
5. *[nbṭw w'l ḥy]y hgrw brth wḥrtt brh br hn'ktbs'lw [byrḥ]*
6. *['šr]yn w'rb' lḥrtt mlk nbṭw rḥm 'mh*

. . . which . . . for Baalshamin the god of Maliku . . . for the life of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people, and for the life of Shaqilat his sister, queen of the Nabataeans, and for the life of Maliku and Obodat and Rabbel and Paṣi'el and Su'udat their children, and for the life of Shaqilat, wife of Maliku son of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people, and for the life of Gamilat, princess of the Nabataeans, and for the life of Hagiru her daughter and Ḥaretat her son, son of Han'aktabsa'lu, in the month of . . . year 24 of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people.

1: *b'šmyn*: the restoration of the divine name is based on a suggestion of Milik in Khairy 1981, pp. 25–26. This spelling of Baalshamin's name is not uncommon, and is found also in Nabataea on a text from Bosra (*CIS* II 176; Niehr 2003 p. 263).
'lh mnkw: this probably refers to Malichus I (59–30 BC). A text from the Wadi Rumm associates both Baalshamin and Dushara with the Nabataean king (Savignac 1934 no. 19), but it is far more common for Dushara alone to be described as the god of the king (see below pp. 234–237).

2–5: This section lists members of Aretas IV's royal household. The precise genealogy can be constructed in a number of different ways depending on the restoration of the lacunae (see Healey for a summary of the issues).

6: *[ʿšr]yn w'rbʿ*: Healey suggests the restoration *[ʿšr]yn* on the basis of text 5 below. The *–yn w'rbʿ* could refer to year 24, 34 or 44 of Aretas IV's reign. Text 5, however, mentions an extra child of Aretas, Hagiru, and so must postdate this text. As 5 is dated to the 29th year of Aretas' rule, only 24 is possible here.

5.

AD 20/21. Neatly carved on the side of a piece of rock that protrudes down from the roof of the Chapel of Obodas, a triclinium in a secluded complex at the end of the Wadi Nmeir (fig. 29; p. 78 above). The text is well preserved, with only the end of the first line and the beginning of the fourth missing more than a few characters.

CIS II 354; Cantineau 1932 pp. 5–6; Dijkstra 1995 pp. 57–60; Yardeni 2000 A 313, B [103]; *Quellen* pp. 250–255; Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 214–216; Healey 2009 no. 4.

1. *dnh ṣlm' dy 'bdt 'lh' dy 'bdw bny ḥnynw br ḥṭyšw br pṭmwn [. . .]*
2. *dy lwt dwtr' 'lh ḥṭyšw dy bṣhwt pṭmwn 'mhm 'l ḥyy ḥrtt mlk nbṭw rḥm 'm[h wšqyl]*
3. *t 'ḥth mlkt nbṭw wmlkw w'bdt wrb'l wpṣ'l wšʿwdt whgrw bnwhy wḥrtt br h[grw. . .]*
4. *[. . . šnt] 29 lḥrtt mlk nbṭw rḥm 'mh bly šlm*

This is the statue of Obodat the god which the sons of *ḥnynw* son of *ḥṭyšw* son of *pṭmwn* made . . . which is with (that of) Dutara the god of *ḥṭyšw*, who is in the terrace of *pṭmwn*, their ancestor. For the life of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people, and Shaqilat his sister, queen of the Nabataeans, and Maliku and Obodat and Rabbel and Paṣi'el and Suʿudat and Hagiru, his children, and Ḥaretat, son of Hagiru . . . Year 29 of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people. Indeed, peace!

1: *ṣlm'*, statue/image: unfortunately no trace of this survives. Wenning discusses the possible forms it may have taken here, and notes the unusual shape of the niche that is carved below the text (Wenning 1997 pp. 187–189). As *ṣlm*' is used, rather than one of the Nabataean words known to describe idol blocks, it is suggested that we may have an anthropomorphic image here. Healey notes the *ṣlmt*' of the goddess Sia mentioned in a bilingual text from that site, but unfortunately no image survives there either (Healey 2001 p. 156; for the goddess Sia see below p. 183, n. 76).
'bdt 'lh': for a discussion of the divine Obodat, see pp. 156–159. He appears again at Petra in text no. 19.

2: *dwtr' 'lh*: the god Dutara has been the object of much discussion as he is found nowhere else (see most recently Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 215–216). There

is ambiguity in the reading, as the *d* and *r* are not distinguishable in this text, and so *dwtr'* and *dwtd'* are possible. The name seems to be constructed on the same principle as *dwšr'*, but there is no toponym *tr'* / *td'* known from Petra that could explain this construction. One suggestion sees *dwtr'* as a dialectical variation of *dwšr'*, but this is not found elsewhere (Knauf in Wenning 1997 p. 190). Milik suggested *dwtr'* as a contraction of *dw 'tr* ('He of the place') (Milik 1959 p. 560, n. 1). Nehmé seems to prefer this (n. 149), and can suggest a parallel from the Hauran: *'lt d't 'l'tr*, 'Allat, Lady of the place' (see below p. 194).

ṣḥwt, terrace: this refers to some kind of construction, but the exact meaning is not certain (*DNWSI* p. 964). The term also appears in no. 8 below, where it is listed as some part of the Turkmaniyeh tomb complex. Here it will probably refer to either the whole complex or area around the Chapel of Obodas, or the Chapel itself (hence Dijkstra and Healey choose 'chapel', while *Quellen* chooses 'Bergeshöhe').

6.

AD 28/29. Inscribed on a slab of white marble found in a room alongside the Temple of the Winged Lions in the town centre. The stone is broken on the left hand side. It gives the most detailed information we have from Nabataea for the administration of a temple.

Hammond *et al.* 1986; Jones 1989; Yardeni 2000 A 312, B [103]; *Quellen* pp. 237–238; Healey 2009 no. 5.

1. *mh dy y't' lh mn ksp wdhb wqrbwn wzwn klh wmn ksp' wnḥ[š'. . .*
2. *wlkmry' plg' 'ḥrn' 'm 'klt' kdy hwh qdm dnh pytḥlqwn [. . .*
3. *'lwhy dy 'bd k'yr kl dy 'l' ktyb pypr' mh dy yštkḥ '[lwhy. . .*
4. *bywm 'rb'h b'b šnt tltyn wšb' lḥrtt mlk nbṭw rḥm 'mh wtw[. . .*

Whatever comes to him from silver and gold and offerings and all provisions, and from silver coin and bronze coin . . . and to the priests the other half with the food, as they were before this (person), so that they are divided . . . against him that he has done other than all that which is written above, he will pay whatever will be found against him . . . on the fourth of Ab, year 37 of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people.

1: *ksp* / *ksp'*, silver: the switch from the absolute to the emphatic state is explained by the editors as moving from silver in the general sense to silver coinage specifically. The following mention of *nḥš'*, 'bronze coinage', appears to support this, as the Nabataean kings minted in silver and bronze.

2: The reading of this line has caused much difficulty, particularly *kdy hwh qdm dnh*. Jones preferred *kryz hww qdm dnh*, 'are assigned in the presence of this

one', referring to an official who has the responsibility of allotting the temple goods. His drawing of the text shows *hww* clearly, but the photograph printed in Hammond *et al.* does not appear so definitive. Yardeni suggests *kdy hwh qdm dnh*, 'as they were before this'. Healey prefers to modify *hwh* to *hwy*, making it 3rd pers. fem. plu. with *'klt'* as the subject. Both the photo in Hammond *et al.* and the drawing in Jones, however, clearly do not show a *y*, but the *h* of Yardeni is possible.

3: *k'yr kl dy 'l' ktyb*, against all that which is written above: a common legal formula in the Hegra tomb texts (see below pp. 133–139). Jones suggests that this refers to temple officials who have misappropriated funds, and therefore are required to pay them back.

7.

AD 70–106 (several more specific dates are possible, depending on the restoration of the family tree, see *Quellen* pp. 266–268). Inscribed on a sandstone block that was found under the Ḥubta massif, but probably not in its original location. The stone is badly worn; the reading below follows Dijkstra.

Dalman 1912 no. 92; *RES* 1434; Cantineau 1932 pp. 9–10; Milik and Starcky 1970 p. 158; Dijkstra 1995 pp. 61–62; *Quellen* pp. 263–268.

1. *. . .]' dy '[. . .*
2. *[w]brh [d]y [mn] qbyt' hw w[. . .] '[b]d'lg'*
3. *br 'bd'lg' dy [m]n swdy w[m. . .] wbnwhy*
4. *[w]whb'lhy wrb'l w[. . .] wwhb'lhy*
5. *[w]bn[w]h[y] l'lh ṣ'bw 'lh' dy [b]'ṣl ḥbt' 'l ḥy[y]*
6. *[r]b'l [m]lk' mlk nbṭw dy 'ḫyy wš[y]zb '[m]h*
7. *[w']l ḥyy gmlt whgrw 'ḫwt[h m]lkt nbṭw bny mlkw*
8. *[mlk]' mlk nbṭw br ḥrtt mlk nbṭw rḥm 'mh*
9. *[w'l ḥy]y qšm'l wš'[w]dt 'ḫwth mlkt nbṭw w'[l]*
10. *[ḥyy . . . m]lk[w] bn[y] rb'l wgmlt whgrw [. . .*
11. *[. . . 'ḫwth m]lkt nb[ṭw w'l ḥ]yy qšm'[l]*
12. *[. . . rb'l mlk n]bṭw dy '[ḥ]yy wšyzb*
13. *['mh]*

. . that . . . and his sons who are from Qabita, he and. . .*'bd'lg*' son of *'bd'lg*' who is from Suweidah and . . . and his sons, and *whb'lhy* and Rabbel and . . . and *whb'lhy* and his sons for the god Ṣabu, the god who is in the ?territory? of Ḥubta, for the life of Rabbel the king, king of the Nabataeans, who brings life and deliverance to his people, and for the life of Gamilat

and Hagiru, his sisters, princesses of the Nabataeans, children of Malichus the king, king of the Nabataeans, son of Ḥaretat, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people, and for the life of Qoshmail and Shaudat, his sisters, princesses of the Nabataeans, and for the life of . . . Malichus, the children of Rabbel and Gamilat and Hagiru . . . his sisters, princesses of the Nabataeans, and for the life of Qoshmail . . . Rabbel the king, king of the Nabataeans, who brings life and deliverance to his people.

1: Dalman restores the beginning *dnh ṣlm' dy*, 'this is the statue' (see no. 5). Cantineau includes this but notes that the reading is extremely doubtful, and suggests "c'est plutôt la stèle elle-même qu'offrent les auteurs de l'inscription". As noted above, the text was found in a secondary location, so there is little clue as to what was being dedicated.

2–3: The location of Qabita is not known. *Swdy* is probably modern Suweidah in the Hauran (see map 5 below).

5: Dalman and Cantineau had restored the middle of this line similarly: *l'lh w'lw 'lh' rb' bnḥbt'*, "to the god of Wailu the great god in Naḥabta". Milik and Starcky, however, recognised the god Ṣabu. He may also appear in a text from Hegra (Milik and Starcky 1970 p. 157, no. 111) and a Hismaic text (Healey 2001 pp. 153–154), and more definitely in a text from Palmyra where he is called the Gad of the Nabataeans (*'lh ṣ'bw dy mqr' gd' nbṭ*, "the god Ṣabu, who is called the Gad of the Nabataeans" (*CIS* II 3991; Kaizer 1997 p. 156)). Healey cautions, however, that Ṣabu may be a personal or place name, rather than the name of the deity himself (Healey 2001 p. 154). Kaizer suggests that 'the Nabataeans' in the Palmyrene text may refer to the Nabataean inhabitants of Palmyra (Kaizer 1998 p. 53).
'ṣl, territory?: Healey 2001 p. 153 suggests this translation and notes the difficulty of interpretation. The word is also found in no. 9, l. 3 below, where is seems to refer to property or buildings (see also *DNWSI* p. 99).

5–13: This is another text which gives us detailed information on the royal house (see also nos 4 and 5). The details of the genealogy are not entirely clear (see *Quellen* pp. 266–268).

8.

AD 70–106. In the Qattar ed-Deir (see p. 73 above), carved into the rock face next to a niche containing two idol blocks, one of which bears a secondary carving of a Patriarchal cross (D 431). The inscription is badly worn as water drips down the rock face here all throughout the year.

Milik 1958 no. 7; Dijkstra 1995 pp. 62–63; Wenning 2001a pp. 81–82; *Quellen* pp. 258–259.

1. *dnh mṣb'*
2. *dy bṣr' d[y]*
3. *[']bd [. . .]lhy b[r]*
4. *[. . .']l ḥyyh*
5. *wḥ[yy]*
6. *rb'l mlk nbṭ*
7. *w*

This is the idol block of Boṣra, that . . . made for his life and the life of Rabbel, king of the Nabataeans.

1: *mṣb'*, idol block: *nṣyb'* (no. 18) and *nṣtb'* were also used in Nabataea to describe idol blocks (see Healey 2001 p. 156; Wenning 2001a pp. 80–83; Gaifman 2008 p. 60). There is an inexact parallel of *mṣb'* from Hegra (JS I no. 58).

1–2: *mṣb' dy bṣr'*, idol block that is Boṣra: Milik translates this as "le bétyle de Boṣra", and sees three possible meanings: "l'idole qui est à Boṣra", "l'idole propre à la ville de Boṣra" or "l'idole de la déesse Boṣra". The first is discounted as normally in Nabataean a prepositional *b* would be required: *mṣb' dy bbṣr'*. The second, Milik considers, would refer to the primitive idol of Boṣra, of which the name had been forgotten. This is discounted as, with the popularity of the cults of Dushara and Allat at Boṣra, *mṣb' dy bṣr'* would not suffice to distinguish this primitive deity. He therefore prefers to see here the goddess Boṣra, personification of the city, and makes a link with the goddess Sia in the Hauran (see below p. 183, n. 76). Starcky prefers rather to see the god A'ra in the background here, considering his strong association with Boṣra (Starcky 1966 col. 988–989). *Quellen* also prefers a god, pointing to the masculine noun *mṣb'*.

4: *'l ḥyyh*, for his own life: Dijkstra notes the dedicator is the prime beneficiary here. It is suggested that the abbreviated nature of the text, where there are given neither details of the dedicator's family nor the royal house nor Rabbel's customary epithet, may be intended "to highlight the personal relationship between dedicator and king . . ." (p. 63).

5: *rb'l mlk nbṭw*, Rabbel, king of the Nabataeans: Milik notes parallels in the letter forms to coins of Rabbel II, and uses this as the basis for his dating. Starcky suggests the possibility of Rabbel I (c.85–84 BC) (Starcky 1966 col. 989). The later date is more in line with the rest of our material from Petra.

9.

Date uncertain. On the façade of the Turkmaniyeh Tomb, just to the north of the town centre, this is the only substantial inscription surviving from Petra's tombs. It contains a number of architectural terms which are not well understood; the choices below follow mainly Conklin and Healey.

CIS II 350; Cantineau 1932 pp. 3–5; Yardeni 2000 A 319, B [106]; *Quellen* pp. 259–263; Conklin 2004, Healey 2009 no. 6.

1. *qbr' dnh wṣryḥ' rb' dy bh wṣryḥ' z'yr' dy gw' mnh dy bh bty mqbryn 'bydt gwḥyn*
2. *wkrk' dy qdmyhm w'rkwt' wbty' dy bh wgny' wgnt smk' wb'rwt my' wṣḥwt' wṭwry'*
3. *wš'ryt kl 'ṣl' dy b'try' 'lh ḥrm wḥrg dwšr' 'lh mr'n' wmwtbh ḥryš' w'lhy' klhm*
4. *bštry ḥrmyn kdy bhm ppqdwn dwšr' wmwtbh w'lhy' klhm dy kdy bštry ḥrmy' 'nw yt'bd wl' ytšn'*
5. *wl' ytpṣṣ mn kl dy bhm mnd'm wl' ytqbr bqbr' dnh 'nwš klh lhn mn dy ktyb lh tn' mqbr bštry ḥrmy' 'nw 'd 'lm*

This tomb and the large burial-chamber that is in it and the small burial-chamber that is further within, in which are burial places—i.e. niche arrangements—and the enclosure in front of them and the porticoes and the chambers that are in it [the enclosure] and the seats and triclinium-garden and the wells of water and the terraces and the walls and all the rest of the property that is in these places is sacred and dedicated to Dushara, god of our lord, and his sacred throne and all the gods, through the documents of consecration in accordance with that which is in them. And it is the order of Dushara and his throne and all the gods that it should be done in accordance with that in those documents of consecration, and nothing may be changed and nothing removed from all that is in them, and none may be buried in this tomb except anyone for whom an authorisation for burial has been written in those documents of consecration, forever.

1: The interior consists of two burial chambers (*ṣryḥ'*), one leading on to the next. At the rear of the second is a large recess, and there are graves cut into the floor of the first chamber (see BD 633).

2–3: The precise meaning of several of these terms cannot be determined with certainty (see Healey 2009). It is clear, however, that they are describing the tomb and its associated structures. The excavations in the Wadi Farasa have provided us with the best idea of how such complexes may have appeared (see above p. 80).

3: *ḥrm wḥrg dwšr'*, sacred and dedicated to Dushara: that tombs could be *ḥrm* is known from Hegra where many tombs are described in this way. *ḥrg* is rarer, but has the same meaning of something being prohibited or forbidden (see *DNWSI* p. 403).
dwšr' 'lh mr'n', Dushara, god of our lord: this must refer to the king, as many texts explicitly link Dushara and the Nabataean king. Healey notes

that in a text from 'Ayn esh-Shallaleh both Baalshamin and Dushara are described as *'lhy mr'n*' (Healey 2001 p. 154, the text is Savignac 1934 no. 19; see also text no. 4 above).

mwtbh ḥryš', his sacred throne: Dushara's *mwtb* also appears in l. 4, and again in a tomb text from Hegra. Only here, however, is it qualified as *ḥryš'*. One interpretation sees Ḥarisha as the name of the divinised *mwtb* (e.g. Starcky 1966 col. 962; Gawlikowski 1990 p. 2668). More recently, however, *ḥryš'* has been seen rather as an adjective, 'sacred', with the word order being the main argument (Healey 1993 pp. 156–158; *DNWSI* p. 408). There could be several iconographical parallels from Petra for Dushara's throne. The most likely comes from the 'House of Dorotheos', a collection of monuments to the east of the town centre on the face of the Ḥubta massif, where what seems to be an empty throne sits within a niche (D 694) (fig. 35). Presumably an idol block could be placed on the throne when required. More frequent are the idol blocks that have a trapezoidal base which could also have been intended to represent a throne (e.g. fig. 36; for more on *mwtb* iconography in Nabataea see Patrich 1990 pp. 91–92 and Wenning 2001a pp. 88–90). Importance was also attached to the deity's throne in other areas of the Near East, particularly in the cults of Astarte (see e.g. Philonenko 1993).

w'lhy' klhm, and all the gods: the phrase appears once again at Petra (no. 11 below), and twice in the same text from Hegra. While the phrase certainly reflects Dushara's unique position among Nabataea's deities, there is no need to see it as part of the formation of a pantheon structure (as in Healey 2001 p. 82).

4: *pqdwn dwšr'*, the order of Dushara: *CIS* and the early commentators translated *pqdwn* in this way. Milik argued rather for something like 'responsibility', suggesting that it is the responsibility of Dushara that things are done in accordance with the documents of consecration (Milik 1959 p. 556). This change was widely accepted, e.g. *DNWSI* p. 933. After examining the issue in detail, however, Conklin concludes that the Jewish Aramaic and Syriac parallels do not easily support this reading of *pqdwn* (Conklin 2004). He also examines the tomb texts from Hegra, where only human beings are ever charged with responsibility, and not the gods. It would be strange, therefore, if Dushara was given a responsibility here. He also suggests modifications to the syntax, and makes *pqdwn* the subject of *yt'bd*: 'Now the order of Dushara *et al.*, which is in accordance with those documents of consecration, must be carried out'. Healey objects that the word order *yt'bd pqdwn* would be more natural for this reading, and so suggests the translation above along the lines of the original syntax (Healey 2009 pp. 66–67). He also notes, however, that *yt'bd* is unusually placed after *dy. . . 'nw*. It seems that the word order alone cannot produce a satisfactory solution, but we should note that divine orders are a regular feature of religious inscriptions surviving from the Roman Near East (e.g. Aliquot 2009 pp. 135–137 for the Lebanon, Kaizer 2002 pp. 111–112 for Palmyra, and Veyne 1986 for the wider context).

10.

Date uncertain. Recently discovered in tomb BD 353 on the side of the Umm el-Biyara. The tomb has a number of burial niches inside, and two of them have texts identifying the occupants carved above.

Nehmé 2003b pp. 223–232.

a. 1. *bgwḥ' dnh gt šʿd'lhy 'b hn't spr'*
2. *ppqdwn dwšr' dy l' ynpq yth 'nwš lʿlm*

In this cavity (is) the body of *šʿd'lhy*, father of *hn't* the scribe, and it is the order of Dushara that anyone shall not remove it, forever.

b. 1. *bgwḥ' dnh gt 'm'byh 'm hn't spr'*
2. *pp[qdwn dw]š[r' dy l' yn]pq yth 'nwš lʿlm*

In this cavity (is) the body of *'m'byh*, mother of *hn't* the scribe, and it is the order of Dushara that anyone shall not remove it, forever.

1: *gwḥ'*, cavity: the term can be used of a number of different types of grave carved inside a tomb (see Nehmé and Macdonald in Dentzer *et al.* 2002a pp. 114–119).
2: *pqdwn dwšr'*, the order of Dushara: for this translation see above no. 9, l. 3. For the role of the gods in protecting the dead at Petra, see above p. 81.
l' ynpq yth 'nwš, anyone shall not remove it: this exact formula is also found at Hegra (Healey 1993 no. 9, l. 7).

11.

Date uncertain. In the Sadd al-Maajin, near niche D 574.

Dalman 1912 no. 28; *RES* 1401; Knauf 1990.

1. *šlm ʿbdml[. . .*
2. *br ʿbydw mn qdm*
3. *dwšr' w'lhy' klhm bṭb*
4. *šlm qr"*

Peace to *ʿbdml . . .* son of *ʿbydw*, from before Dushara and all the gods, for good. Peace to the reader.

3: *dwšr' w'lhy' klhm*, Dushara and all the gods: note also no. 9 above.

12.

Date uncertain. Graffito carved in the Shub Qays near a group of three empty niches.

Milik and Starcky 1975 pp. 126–128.

1. *dkrwn ṭb*
2. *. . .] br nḥšṭb*
3. *bny' mn qdm*
4. *dwšr'*

Be remembered for good . . . son of *nḥšṭb* the builder, from before Dushara.

1: *dkrwn ṭb*, be remembered for good: the phrase is very common in Petra and Nabataea. Less common is the addition of a deity's name in the formula *mn qdm x* at the end (see nos 13, 14 and 20 below).
2: *bny'*, builder: this may refer to the construction of a major aqueduct which runs through the Shub Qays towards the town centre (see Gunsam 1989 p. 322).

13.

Date uncertain. Inscribed on the rock by the side of the route leading from en-Nmeir to the Wadi Farasa.

CIS II 401.

1. *dkyr nblw br ʿwydw bṭb*
2. *wšlm mn qdm dwšr'*

Be remembered for good *nblw* son of *ʿwydw*, and peace from before Dushara.

14.

Date uncertain. Inscribed high up in the corner of triclinium BD 40 nearby the Madras high-place. An idol block is carved into the centre of the rear wall (D 89b), and a number of signatures suggest the chamber was used by a *mrzḥ'*.

CIS II 443.

1. *dkyr whbw br qwmw*
2. *w'mh 'lymtd's*
3. *bṭb mn qdm*
4. *dwšr' 'lh mdrs'*

Be remembered for good *whbw* son of *qwmw* and his mother *'lymtd's* from before Dushara, god of Madrasa.

2: *'lymtd's*: this may be a personal name, or *'lymt* could refer to a female slave or child (see *DNWSI* pp. 854–855).
4: *mdrs'*: this could be a personal name, but considering the location it is more likely to refer to el-Madras. Like those texts which attach Dushara to Gaia (below no. 14, l. 2–3), this text is placing him more specifically on the Madras.

15.

Date uncertain. Inscribed on a sandstone block discovered during the excavations of a tomb complex in the Wadi Mataha. The stone is unfortunately broken on the top and left sides, but the letters are otherwise clearly visible.

el-Khouri and Johnson 2005.

1. *. . .t]w[. . .*
2. *'l ḥyy[. . .*
3. *'ḥth mlky[. . .*
4. *dwšr' š[. . .*
5. *nbṭw lḥyy[. . .*

. . . for the life of . . . his sister, rulers of . . . Dushara . . . the Nabataeans, for the life of. . .

1–5: The editors date the text to either late in the reign of Aretas IV or early in the reign of Malichus II based on the letter forms.
The text is clearly similar to nos 4, 5 and 7 above, where a dedication is made 'for the life of' the royal family. Unfortunately we can reconstruct very few details of it here.
3. *mlky*, rulers: *mlky* is found only once elsewhere in Nabataea in an uncertain reading (Starcky and Strugnell 1966 p. 246). The editors there thought it a corruption of *mlkt*, 'queen', but this texts reveals that the king and queen could probably be referred to jointly as *mlky*. This reflects the importance of the queen's position that is also shown elsewhere, particularly in coins showing their busts (see Schwentzel 2008).

16.

Date uncertain. One of a number of graffiti in tomb BD 472 on the el-Meisrah to the north of the city centre. This was carved with a rock-cut basin.

CIS II 423b; Dalman 1912 no. 35; Milik 1972 p. 109.

1. *[d]nh 'gn' dy qrb tymw*
2. *. . .]m br šmytt l'lh*
3. *['l]gy' 'lh' bšlm šlm*

This is the basin that *tymw* . . .son of *šmytt* offered to *'Ilâh-'al-Gai*' the god in peace, peace.

1–3: This reading was only provided by Milik. Earlier suggestions had not seen a dedication, but rather a series of *šlm* blessings with personal names.
1: *'gn'*, basin: see Milik 1972 pp. 108–109; *DNWSI* pp. 9–10.
2–3: *'Ilâh-'al-Gai*' is the translation supplied by Milik. Healey 2001 p. 90 identifies the deity with Dushara in light of other texts from Nabataea which link him to Gaia. One dedicatory inscription from Oboda and another from al-Jawf mention "Dushara the god of Gaia" (Oboda: Negev 1963 no. 10: *dwšr' 'lh g'y'*; al-Jawf: Savignac and Starcky 1957 pp. 196–217: *dwšr' 'lh gy"*).

17.

Date uncertain. Graffito carved in the Sadd al-Maajin, next to a small niche containing a rectangular idol block. Another empty niche is carved a metre below the first.

Milik and Starcky 1975 pp. 124–126; Healey 2001 p. 115.

1. *[š]lm hn't 'lym 'l'z' 'lht'*

Peace to *hn't*, servant of al-'Uzza the goddess.

1: *'lym*, servant: this may refer to a position in a cult of the goddess. The editors note that outside this in Nabataea *'lym* is followed only by anthroponyms (e.g. no. 14 above).
'l'z': al-Uzza appears also in a nearby inscription, as yet unpublished (Milik and Starcky 1975 p. 126), and once more from Petra in no. 18 below, although note the variant spelling *'l'z'*.

18.

Date uncertain. Next to an empty niche on the way to the Ḥubta high-place.

RES 1088; Dalman 1912 no. 85; Wenning 2001a pp. 80–81; *Quellen* pp. 269–272.

1. *'lh nṣyby 'l'z' wmr' byt'*
2. *[dy] 'bd whb'lhy šyd'*
3. *[b]r zydn*

These are the idol blocks of al-Uzza and *mr' byt'*, that *whb'lhy* the plasterer, son of *zydn*, made.

1: *nṣyby*, idol blocks: note no. 8, l. 1 above.
'l'z': note the variant spelling *'l'z'* above no. 17.
mr' byt', Lord of the House/Temple: the same divine title appears in the Wadi Rumm (Savignac 1933 no. 4) and twice at Hegra (below pp. 143–145). It is usually taken as being a title of Dushara (e.g. Healey 2001 p. 92). Nehmé suggests that the title could rather refer to the deity of the main temple of a particular town, and so could be used of different gods (Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 192–193). In Petra, this would be the Qasr el-Bint, where the most likely main deity is in any case Dushara. We should also note that a *mrt byt'* (Lady of the Temple) appears at Palmyra (*PAT* 1929). In that case, the context determines that it must be a title of Allat (Kaizer 2002 pp. 103–104).
2: *šyd'*, plasterer, or *šyr'*, caravan-leader, both readings are possible.

19.

Date uncertain. Inscribed in a hollow above a niche on the edge of the plateau behind the Deir. The niche (D 456) is empty and sits above a large chamber, now almost completely filled in, whose function is uncertain.

Dalman 1912 no. 73; *RES* 1423; Healey 2001 p. 148.

1. *dkyr 'bydw br zq'*
2. *wḥbrwhy mrzḥ 'bdt*
3. *'lh'*

Remembered be *'bydw* son of *zq'* and his companions, the *mrzḥ'* of Obodat the god.

2: *mrzḥ*, see above p. 78 and nos 20 and 21 for *mrzḥ*' at Petra.
2–3: *'bdt 'lh'*, Obodat the god: see also no. 5 above.

20.

Date uncertain. This badly eroded graffito was found on the back wall of the stibadium D 398 / BD 425 in the Wadi Siyyagh. A number of signatures from the same chamber have led to the suggestion that it was used by a *mrzḥ*' (*RES* 1430).

Milik and Teixidor 1961.

1. *[?dkyr?]. . .*
2. . . .
3. *. . .]'wšw[. . .*
4. *qdm kwtb'*
5. *'lh' dnh [. . .*
6. . . .

Remembered be . . . before Kutba this god . . .

1: *dkyr*, remembered be: the editors could not read these letters, but they are assumed from the rest of the text, *dkyr x qdm x* being a common formula (e.g. nos 12, 13 and 14 above).
4–5: *kwtb' 'lh' dnh*: Kutba this god: the editors discuss this in the context of the debate over the gender of the deity *'lktb*' (see now Healey 2001 pp. 120–124). The masculine *'lh' dnh* clearly indicates a male deity here, but elsewhere *'lktb*' appears to be feminine. Healey points to the different spellings, and prefers to see two deities, the goddess *'lktb*' and the god *kwtb'*. The editors suggest that the demonstrative shows that originally there would have been a representation of the deity here, as this is how they are often signalled in Petra (e.g. nos 2 and 5 above). No trace of this, however, survives.
5–6: The editors originally suggested that the end of line 5 and line 6 were illegible. However, it seems that in the unpublished corpus of Milik and Starcky they could be read and give a dating formula of 'the twenty first year of the Eparchy', i.e. AD 126/127. See Nehmé 1997a p. 1041.

21.

Date uncertain. Graffito carved into the cliffs at Wadi el-Amti near el-Beidha.

CIS II 476; Zayadine 1991a.

1. *dkrwn ṭb [w]šl[m] lgnmw rb*
2. *mrzḥ' ww'lw brh*

Be remembered for good and peace to *gnmw*, chief of the *mrzḥ'*, and *w'lw* his son.

1: *rb*, chief: this title appears several times elsewhere in Petra and Nabataea, and can be applied to a variety of positions (*DNWSI* pp. 1045–1051).
2: *rb mrzḥ'*: the position is known elsewhere in the Near East, and it is particularly common at Palmyra (see Kaizer 2002 pp. 229–234). It also appears once at Oboda in the Negev (below p. 154).

22.

Date uncertain. Near an idol block on the route to the Madbah high-place.

BD 81; D 193; Nehmé 1997a p. 1044, n. 112.

1. *'tr't'*

Atargatis

1: The spelling is the same as no. 23 below.

23.

Date uncertain. Carved in the Wadi Siyyagh below an idol block with stylised eyes (fig. 37).

CIS II 422, 423; Lindner and Zangenberg 1993.

1. *'tr't' mnbgyt'*

Atargatis Manbigitess

1: *mnbgyt'*: the reference here is to Membij (Hierapolis) in northern Syria, the most important cult centre of Atargatis in the Near East (Pliny *HN* 5.19.81; Strabo 16.1.27). It is generally considered that *mnbgyt'* also refers to Atargatis, although Healey suggests that it may rather describe a devotee (Healey 2001 p. 141).

24.

AD 130–221. Dedication carved on a small square block from the temenos of the Qasr el-Bint.

Starcky and Bennett 1968 pl. X, 6 (although not analysed in the text); *IGLS* XXI: IV 22.

1. Τύχῃ
2. Ἁδριανῆς
3. Πέ[τ]ρας
4. μητροπό[λεως]

To the Tyche of Hadrianē Petra, Metropolis.

2–3: Ἁδριανῆς Πέ[τ]ρας μητροπό[λεως]: *IGLS* notes that Petra carried these titles between Hadrian's visit in 130 and its elevation to a colony in 221.

25.

Date uncertain. Found in 1980 during excavations in the Siq. The inscription is neatly carved on a sandstone altar, about 70cm high, with horns on its four corners. 500m from the Khazneh along the Siq.

Zayadine 1981 p. 352; *IGLS* XXI: IV 20.

1. Θεῶι ἁγίωι
2. ἐπηκόωι
3. Οὐικτωρῖνος
4. β(ενε)φ(ικιάριος) εὐξάμενος
5. ἀνέθηκεν

To the holy listening god, Victorinus, *beneficiarius*, has consecrated (this altar) in fulfilment of a vow.

1: Θεῶι ἁγίωι ἐπηκόωι, the holy listening god: this divine title may appear once more at Petra (no. 31 below), where he may be identified as Dousares.

26.

Date uncertain. Inscribed on an altar found on the northern bank of the Wadi Musa, opposite the Qasr el-Bint. The text is very worn and there is much uncertainty as to the reading.

Parr 1957 no. 24; *SEG* XX 410; *IGLS* XXI: IV 21.

1. Διὶ Ἁγίῳ
2. ΩΤΙΚΩ
3. Δευσαρι
4. . . .

To Zeus Hagios . . . Dousari(os). . .

1: Διὶ Ἁγίῳ: see no. 30 below.
2: *SEG* suggests Σωτῆρι here, whereas *IGLS* suggests ἐπηκόωι in light of nos 25 and 31.
3: The original editors suggest Καίσαρι here. *IGLS* prefers Dousarios as the name of the dedicant, as this requires fewer changes.

27.

Date uncertain. Two fragments of a marble base that were found inside the Qasr el-Bint, clearly in a secondary use

Zayadine 1985 p. 245; *IGLS* XXI: IV 23.

1. ΣΥΨ
2. ΙΑ

1: Zayadine and *IGLS* suggest that this fragment could be restored [Ζεὺ]ς Ὕψ[ιστος].

28.

Date uncertain. Marble plaque, broken on all sides, found inside the Qasr el-Bint.

IGLS XXI: IV 24.

1. . . .]σεβα[. . .
2. . . .]δειτη[. . .
3. . . .]οκολω[. . .

. . .Seba[stos . . . Aphro]dite[. . .Metr]ocolonia. . .

1–3: The form suggests a dedication for the safety of the emperor, and *IGLS* suggests a restoration along the lines of: [Ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας καὶ νεικῆς τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος. . .] Σεβα[στοῦ . . . Ἀφρο]δείτῃ [. . . ἡ μητρ] οκολω[νεία. . .]. Note, however, no. 29, l. 2–3 below.

2: [Ἀφρο]δείτῃ: the goddess appears more certainly also in no. 29 at Petra. Her appearance in the city may help to explain the reference to an Aphrodesion at Petra in the archive of Babatha (see p. 58 above).

29.

Date uncertain. The stone was discovered, in secondary use, during excavations of the Petra Church. The editors suggest that a cross carved beneath the third line "may signify an attempt to "Christianize" a stone that had on it the name of a pagan goddess".

Fiema *et al.* 2001 p. 343.

1. . . .
2. [ἐκ κελ]εύσεως τῆς σεβασμιω
3. [τάτης Ἀφρ]οδείτης ἐκ ἰδίων ἔκτισεν
4. Ἀ(υρήλιος) Θέμος Μαρκιανοῦ

Aurelius Themos, son of Markianos, has built (this) on the order of the most venerable Aphrodite at his own expense.

2–3: σεβασμιω[τάτης Ἀφρ]οδείτης: the editors mention a suggestion of Glen Bowersock that this divine title may now provide a more fitting restoration for no. 28 above than that suggested in *IGLS*.

30.

Date uncertain. Found in a rock-cut sanctuary at the western end of the Umm el-Biyara plateau (see Bennett 1980). This text is carved on a rock face that carries a number of niches and idol blocks.

IGLS XXI: IV 27.

1. Ζεῦ α
2. ?]?ιι ?γιε συ
3. νοπρι τὰ
4. τέκνα
5. Ἱερωνύμ

To Zeus Hagios . . . the children of Hieronymos.

2–3: *IGLS* notes that the two vertical strokes at the beginning of l. 2 are very faint and may well not be part of the text. It restores these lines Ζεῦ ἅ|γιε σ(τῆ)ρι, τὰ, "to Zeus Hagios Soter", but cautions that this is very conjectural.

31.

Date uncertain. In the same sanctuary on the Umm el-Biyara plateau as no. 30 above. This text was carved beneath an empty niche and has been badly eroded.

IGLS XXI: IV 28.

1. . . .]πηκω Δου
2. . . .]Ολφιος
3. . . .]ων[. . .ἐ]κ τῶν
4. [ἰδίων. . .]τω

1–2: *IGLS* restores this: "[Θεῷ ἁγίῳ ἐ]πηκ(ό)ῳ Δου[σάρι" and so sees the same divine recipient as no. 25, but this time identified as Dousares. If correct, this would be the only time Dousares, familiar from the Hauran in the Roman period (see below pp. 196–198), is explicitly named at Petra. However, we should also note no. 26 above, where Dousarios appears to be the name of the dedicant. It seems that the same possibility is open here.

Map 3. Sites at the southern end of Nabataea (Farès-Drappeau 2005 carte 1).

CHAPTER THREE

HEGRA IN CONTEXT: NABATAEAN TOWNS IN THE NORTHERN HIJAZ

The Hijaz, comprising the mountainous terrain between the Red Sea and the interior desert, stretches from the Gulf of Aqaba down the west coast of Saudi Arabia. At some point during the first century BC, Nabataean rule was extended over the northern part of the region as far as Hegra and other nearby centres, about five hundred kilometres southwards from Petra. At about the same time, the al-Jawf oasis, about five hundred kilometres to the east of Petra, was also brought under Nabataean control.[1] The importance of these settlements lay in their role in the incense trade. After arriving from the south, it seems likely that the caravans could take one of two main routes which diverged around the area of Hegra. One went northwards, towards Petra and the Mediterranean, while the other headed north-eastwards towards Tayma before reaching al-Jawf, and then perhaps from there to the Persian Gulf.[2] Similarly, al-Jawf may have been a stopping point for caravans coming from the Gulf and leaving towards Petra or areas further to the north. By extending his control to these distant centres, the Nabataean king could ensure income from all the overland caravans moving up the western side of the Arabian Peninsula.[3]

The settlements in the Hijaz, then, are the most distant parts of the kingdom from the royal centre at Petra, and the evidence available here

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[1] For a catalogue of the material from al-Jawf, see Wenning 1987 pp. 114–115. There is evidence to show it as a thriving settlement in the Nabataean period. The earliest Nabataean inscription dates from AD 4/5 (al-Theeb 1994 p. 34), and they continue until the reign of Rabbel II. A text published in Savignac and Starcky 1957 records that the settlement held a sanctuary (*mḥrmt'*) to Dushara the god of Gaia (*dwšr' 'lh gy"*), which was restored in the fifth year of Malichus II—AD 45/46. Several more Nabataean texts were collected from the region during the survey of Winnett and Reed (see Milik and Starcky 1970). The settlement has often attracted attention in light of Porphyry's comment that its inhabitants used to practice human sacrifice (*De abst*. 2.56.6). Porphyry, however, was writing towards the end of the third century, and even if his report does contain some truth, it cannot be connected to Nabataea (see Healey 2001 p. 162).

[2] For an overview of the trade routes going through the region in the first millennium BC, see Macdonald 1997 with map p. 349. See Zayadine 2007, with map p. 207, for these trade routes in the context of the Nabataean kingdom. See also now al-Ghabban *et al*. 2010.

[3] See Edens and Bawden 1989; Young 2001 p. 94.

suggests a region subject to historical pressures that were very different from other parts of Nabataea. As in most parts of the Near East, the evidence for the culture and religion of the rest of Nabataea largely begins to appear only in the first century BC. In Petra, the Negev, the Hauran and at Khirbet Tannur, it is roughly to this period that the earliest epigraphic material belongs. Other artefacts can be used to outline a history of occupation that stretches further back, but there is very little specific data as to the religious situation. Millar has highlighted how this is part of a much wider problem with tracing the history of Semitic cultures in the Near East before the Roman period.[4] In the Hijaz, however, the epigraphic material stretches back from the Nabataean period until the middle of the first millennium and beyond. This is partly due to the influence of the south Arabian kingdoms, in particular the Minaeans who had a large trading colony at Dadan.[5] Here, two local dynasties, firstly the kings of Dadan and then the kings of Lihyan, ruled from the sixth or fifth century BC, and the inhabitants of the oasis seem to have left a continuous epigraphic record up to and beyond the Nabataean period. Tayma was also home to an important local culture, and its Aramaic inscriptions provide glimpses into religious practices throughout the second half of the first millennium BC. Similarly, some texts from Hegra attest to habitation there before the Nabataean period. It is here, then, more than anywhere else in the kingdom, that we are in a position to judge the impact of Nabataean rule in the religious sphere.

Hegra (modern Mada'in Salih), Tayma and Dadan (modern al-'Ula) were the most important centres at this southern end of the Nabataean kingdom. They form a convenient group for study. Not only are they all within about one hundred kilometres of each other (see map 3), but they were all subject to the same historical pressures with regard to their role on the incense route. The epigraphic material readily reveals the movement of people and interactions between the three settlements, and this resulted in the sharing of religious customs and ideas. Two of the famous rock-cut tombs of Hegra, for example, were built by individuals who chose to identify themselves as coming from Tayma.[6] These certainly date from

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[4] Millar 1987.

[5] I use here Dadan rather than the more common Dedan. See Macdonald 2000 p. 63, n. 1.

[6] These are Healey 1993 nos 1 and 12 (also *CIS* II 199 and 205). The first was built by a certain "Hawshabu son of Alkuf, the Taymanite [*tymny'*]", the second by "Wushuh daughter of Bagrat and Qaynu and Nashkuyah, her daughters, Taymanites [*tymnyt'*]" (trans. Healey).

the Nabataean period, but there are signs of connections long before this. We find Hegra mentioned once in a text from Dadan, and Tayma appears more regularly.[7] Such interactions were not always so peaceful, and several Ancient North Arabian texts from the Tayma area refer to a "war against Dadan".[8] It seems likely that at different times these three centres were brought into conflict over the control of the caravan trade. This certainly seems to have determined their fortunes, and we can very broadly trace their rise and fall in prominence. Tayma seems to have been the most important centre around and before the middle of the first millennium, as it is the only one to produce epigraphic material this early and has the most prominent profile in the oldest sources. Dadan's inscriptions begin in the sixth or fifth century, reach their apogee in the following two centuries, but begin to fall in number in the second and first centuries. At that point, the greatest concentrations of evidence begin to appear around Hegra.

It must be emphasised that these are only broad trends, but they have been instrumental in shaping academic interest in and analysis of Tayma, Dadan and Hegra. Tayma is often approached in the context of the grand politics of Mesopotamia in the first millennium BC, either as the refuge of the Babylonian king Nabonidus or as the desert city just out of reach of Persian control. Dadan is approached primarily from a linguistic perspective, being home to Dadanitic, a dialect of Ancient North Arabian. These inscriptions finish in the second or first centuries BC, and so the later history of the settlement rarely receives attention.[9] Hegra, on the other hand, is usually approached firmly in the context of the Nabataean kingdom, and the history of the settlement before the first century AD is often not taken into account. This compartmentalisation has given strength to the slightly simplistic idea of a neat succession of centres as outlined above, and there has been little attempt to analyse all three in the same period. However, the archaeological data does not support the notion of one settlement succeeding another, and all the sites show a history of continuous occupation, as far as can be known, from the first millennium until well beyond the Nabataean period. For our purposes, inscriptions from Dadan

[7] Hegra (*ḥgr*) appears in Farès-Drappeau 2005 no. D52. The inscription is also valuable from a linguistic perspective, being written in the Dadanitic script but using Old Arabic in the second part (see Macdonald 2000 p. 52). Tayma appears five times, Farès-Drappeau nos D94, 111, 128, 129 and 151. All these record sacrificial offerings to the god *ḏ-ġbt* (see below pp. 126–128) asking for a favourable harvest to be collected at Tayma.

[8] See, for example, Winnett and Reed 1970 nos 20–23.

[9] Farès-Drappeau 2005 is the most recent comprehensive study of Dadan's inscriptions.

and Tayma reveal that these two places were included in the Nabataean kingdom along with Hegra.[10] Texts from both sites show that the Nabataean script likely came into use here around the first century BC, and the dating of some of these by the Nabataean king shows that he was deemed to be in control.[11]

All three settlements, then, will be examined here. The weight of evidence can leave us in no doubt that Hegra was the most important in the Nabataean period, but Dadan and Tayma were also still occupied by a settled population. They will be included here, then, firstly in their own right, and secondly as helping to provide an overview of the religious system before Nabataean rule was imposed. Too often Hegra is approached only with Petra and the more northerly parts of Nabataea in mind, and with little thought given to its more immediate context. It is within this context, however, that much of Hegra's religious customs can be best explained. Additionally, the religious patterns that emerge through an analysis of the region give us an indication as to where many deities and religious practices that we find elsewhere in Nabataea may have originated. Before moving on to a detailed examination of the sites, however, it will be worthwhile to provide an overview of the linguistic situation and consider any relation this may have had with forming the religious identities of the region's inhabitants.

Languages

The epigraphic remains from the Northern Hijaz reveal the most complicated linguistic situation of any part of Nabataea.[12] As well as the different scripts of Aramaic, a range of languages from the Ancient North Arabian, Ancient South Arabian and Arabic groups are recorded. Some of these texts combine features of two languages as, for example, JSNab 17 from

[10] See Gatier and Salles 1988 for a summary of the political situation at the southern end of the kingdom during the Nabataean period.

[11] Dadan: *CIS* II 332 is dated to the first year of Aretas. This most probably refers to Aretas IV, and so dates to 9/8 BC. A recently discovered Nabataean text from Tayma mentions Aretas IV, and so could fall anywhere from 9 BC–AD 40 (see Hausleiter 2010 p. 236 and www.dainst.org/en/project/tayma).

[12] The most concise linguistic guide to this region is Macdonald 2000. There has been little consistency in the terms applied to the languages of the Northern Hijaz in scholarship, and only gradually has the full complexity and variety of the different dialects and scripts become apparent. See also Roschinksi 1980. An overview of the different scripts of Ancient North Arabian attested from the region can be found in Macdonald 2004 fig. 16.3.

Hegra, which mixes elements of Aramaic and Old Arabic.[13] Much fewer, and much more easily ascribed to specific historical circumstances, are the scattered Cuneiform, Hebrew, Greek and Latin inscriptions from the area. It is the Medhabic (formerly 'Minaeic'), Taymanitic, Dadanitic, Nabataean and the various forms of 'Thamudic' inscriptions that concern us most here. We will examine each briefly to discern whether any political affiliations or religious patterns can be particularly attached to any of them.

The label 'Thamudic' has been applied to a huge number of inscriptions found along the western side of the Arabian Peninsula from Syria to Yemen.[14] It should first be stated there is no historical connection with the tribe of Thamūd.[15] The category has been used to cover a variety of Ancient North Arabian dialects and scripts (those with *h* or *hn* as the definite article) which more detailed analysis has begun to recognise, and will continue to do so. The best way to illustrate this progression in classification is with an example from the 'Thamudic' inscriptions near Tayma. JSTam 505 was found on the route from Hegra to Tayma, where it was inscribed by a certain Mahakdall recording the misfortune that seems to have befallen his camels. Jaussen and Savignac recorded it as an example of 'graffites tamoudéens', a label they applied to hundreds of texts collected near Hegra, Tayma and Tabuk. In his *Study of the Lihyanite and Thamudic Inscriptions*, Winnett recognised several subgroups within the huge numbers of 'Thamudic' texts that had been collected by the early surveyors such as Jaussen and Savignac, which he labelled Thamudic

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[13] For an overview of such mixed texts, see Macdonald 2000 pp. 50–54.

[14] See Macdonald and King 1999 for an overview of the different varieties of 'Thamudic' texts.

[15] We should mention in this context the remains of a temple at Rawwāfah, c. 200km to the north-west of Hegra (see Parr *et al.* 1968–1969 pp. 215–219). A lengthy bilingual Nabataean-Greek text, dating from the middle of the second century AD, records that the building was dedicated to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus and built by the *šrkt tmwdw*/θαμουδηνῶν ἔθνος (Milik in Parr *et al.* 1971 pp. 54–57). Milik translates the Nabataean "fédération des Thamoudéens" and the Greek "la nation des Thamoudéens". Bowersock 1975 follows this translation. This is the only attestation of the noun in Nabataean, however, and Milik's translation has not been universally accepted. Most recently, Macdonald has argued that *šrkt tmwdw*/θαμουδηνῶν ἔθνος refers to a military unit attached to the Roman army. He draws attention to text from southern Syria where ἔθνος seems to refers to a similar military unit, and suggests that *šrkt* can be connected to the Arabic root ŠRK, meaning "to share, to enter into an agreement or partnership voluntarily for a common purpose" (Lane 1541b–1543b in Macdonald 2009b p. 8). The tribe of Thamud is mentioned in other ancient sources (see Shahîd 1999) which also locate it in the Hijaz but give little more information. As for any link between the Thamud and 'Thamudic', then, it is important to note that the languages used in this text are Nabataean and Greek, and not any of the 'Thamudic' dialects.

A, B, C, D and E.[16] JSTam 505, because of several of its distinct letter forms, would have fallen under Thamudic A. Winnett's system still stands in part today. However, as he himself later realised, Thamudic A would be better termed 'Taymanite', as examples of this script are found only around Tayma.[17] As Macdonald points out, however, JSTam 505 should rather be referred to as 'Taymanitic', *-ic* being the most appropriate ending for the languages and scripts.[18] JSTam 505 highlights the complex process of reclassifying that 'Thamudic' inscriptions have undergone, and in many cases still have to undergo.[19] As they cover such a wide length of space and time, detecting any specific political or religious affiliations in these texts is virtually impossible.

The majority of Tayma's texts are in Taymanitic, a dialect of Ancient North Arabian. Dating them is problematic, but it seems there may have been a Taymanitic script as far back as the eighth century BC, and the majority of texts have been dated to the few centuries after this.[20] The move of Nabonidus in the sixth century led to the introduction of cuneiform texts,[21] and after this Aramaic also took hold in the town.[22] The famous 'Tayma Stone', written in Imperial Aramaic and dating to the mid-fifth century BC, describes the introduction of the god *Ṣlm* of *hgm* alongside Tayma's other gods and names a Babylonian priest.[23] Aramaic texts continue through the second half of the first millennium. Particularly significant here are a number of religious dedications found in the

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[16] See Winnett 1937 pp. 18–49. This is not to claim that earlier scholars had not recognised the complexity and variation within this category, but Winnett was the first to categorise them in such detail. He includes a useful summary of the features of each group at pp. 48–49.

[17] Winnett and Reed 1970 pp. 69–70 and pp. 89–90.

[18] Macdonald 2000 p. 28.

[19] Macdonald 2000 p. 43, for example, calls for Winnett's 'Thamudic E' to now be reclassified as Hismaic. Furthermore, in reference to Thamudic B, he states: "it is almost certain that future work will show that this should be subdivided" (p. 44).

[20] Macdonald 2000 p. 42 recalls an eighth century document from Carchemish that may contain a mention of the Taymanitic script. Winnett and Reed 1970 p. 90 come to a similar conclusion by comparison with a closely related script found in Iraq.

[21] See Eichmann *et al.* 2006a pp. 169–174.

[22] For a concise overview of many of the Aramaic texts discovered at Tayma see Livingstone *et al.* 1983 pp. 104–105.

[23] The stone is accompanied by two relief panels, one depicting the god *Ṣlm* with a winged sun disc above his head, the other showing the priest *Ṣlmšzb*, who is responsible for the inscription, in the process of making an offering. The gods *Ṣlm* of *mḥrm*, *Šngl'* and *'šym'* are described in the text as already having a cult in the city, and a grant is made from their existing temple estates to support the sanctuary of the new deity (*CIS* II 113, Gibson 1975 pp. 148–151).

town centre. They were deposited by the rulers of Lihyan, based at Dadan, and written in Aramaic.[24] The political situation of Tayma in this period is uncertain, but the material reveals a close connection with the Lihyanite rulers of Dadan.[25] Nevertheless, the local tradition of Aramaic continued, and the Lihyanite rulers deposited texts in this language and not Dadanitic, the language of their political centre. In the first century AD, Nabataean seems to have become the monumental language of choice, and a recently discovered text shows that this was still in use at the beginning of the third century.[26] There seems to be enough data to show a development, or at least a movement, here from the Imperial Aramaic script to the Nabataean script.[27] One of the texts catalogued by Livingstone *et al.*, for example, is dated on palaeographic grounds to the second century BC, as it shows similar features to the later Nabataean texts.[28]

The linguistic situation at the oasis of Dadan is a little less complicated. The majority of its texts were inscribed in a local script of Ancient North Arabian, most recently labelled 'Dadanitic'.[29] That these texts were not included in the 'Thamudic' category seems to be largely down to them containing references to the local ruler, either the king of Dadan or the king of Lihyan. They have therefore often been split into two subgroups, Dadanite or Lihyanite, in an attempt to associate the script with the political situation.[30] It now seems preferable, however, to refer to them with one

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[24] These texts are not yet published. They are mentioned on http://www.dainst.org/index_3258_en.html and very briefly in Eichmann *et al.* 2006a p. 168.

[25] See *ibid.* pp. 167–169.

[26] The only dated Nabataean text from Tayma contains a reference to Aretas the king, i.e. presumably Aretas IV (see above p. 114, n. 11). Very recently a funerary monument of a Jewish citizen of Tayma written in Nabataean has been found; it dates to the ninety-eighth year of the province, i.e. AD 203 (Al-Najem and Macdonald 2009).

[27] Roschinski 1980 p. 172 has a useful chart comparing the letter forms of the Aramaic used in Tayma with other Aramaic scripts.

[28] Livingstone *et al.* 1983 pp. 105–106. The inscription is from a carved stone basin and records the dedication of an 'enclosure' (*ḥgr'*) to the goddess *mnwh*. Livingstone *et al.* remark that: "In fact, the forms of other letters (e.g. the initial aleph in *'lht*) show that the inscription belongs to a transitional phase between Imperial Aramaic and Nabataean, or is early Nabataean. One could suggest a date in the second century B.C."

[29] This is the label Macdonald chooses to apply (Macdonald 2000 pp. 41–42). Farès-Drappeau 2005, however, opts for the term 'dédano-Liḥyānite', arguing that we should avoid adopting terms too hastily and that we lack enough data to do so (p. 30). Her description of the language is the most recent comprehensive study.

[30] Grimme 1932 pp. 753–758 had suggested that the one text which refers to a 'king of Dadan', along with a few others, were of a different form to the other texts of the oasis. This was based largely on one unusual letter form in the text mentioning the 'King of Dadan' (JSLih 138). Winnett drew attention to the problems with his analysis and proposed different criteria for separating a 'Dadanite' and 'Lihyanite' script. He argued that texts

term, as these are earlier or later forms of development of the same script that cannot be convincingly linked to one political entity, but only to the oasis of Dadan. Macdonald's coining of the term 'Dadanitic' depends upon the fact that, in the ancient sources, Dadan is used in a geographic sense as well as referring to the kingdom, whereas Lihyan refers only to the kingdom. It is preferable, he argues, to name the script after the place.[31] The script is usually thought to have begun around the sixth century, and declined in the second or first century BC.[32] There is therefore considerable variance in the script at different times, and Macdonald suggests it could be further classified into Early, Middle and Late Dadanitic.[33]

Alongside its Dadanitic texts, Dadan has the highest concentration of Medhabic (Minaeic) inscriptions in the region. Part of the Ancient South Arabian group, it is quite distinct from Dadanitic and the other Ancient North Arabian dialects.[34] Until quite recently, the language was referred to as Minaean or Minaeic, after the Minaean kingdom based at Ma'in (ancient Qarnawu) in modern day Yemen. It took a central role in the organisation of the incense trade in the second half of the first millennium BC, and sent out colonies to many other centres involved in the trade, including Dadan. The language, however, seems to have preceded the Minaeans, who adopted it for use in their inscriptions at home and abroad, and so is now named after the Wadi Medhab (Yemen), where it originated.[35] The kingdom of Ma'in flourished from the fourth to the second century BC, and so the inscriptions can be dated to that period

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with characters that do not show a tendency to converge at the base should be labelled 'Dadanite', and the others 'Lihyanite' (Winnett 1937 pp. 10–11).

[31] Macdonald 2000 p. 33.

[32] Farès-Drappeau 2005 pp. 113–116 gives a detailed overview of the debate over the chronology of these inscriptions. The difficulty is that although we have several references to the local era (e.g. the *x* year of *y*, king of Lihyan), there are no external references to anchor any reconstructed timeline. Two radically different chronologies have therefore been suggested. The first, outlined by Winnett 1937 pp. 49–51, brings in various comparative data to produce a date of the sixth century BC for the start of these texts, and sees them as carrying on unbroken until the second century BC. The second, proposed by Caskel 1954, sees them as beginning only in the second century BC, stopping during a period of Nabataean domination in the first century AD, and starting again in the second century AD for a short period. Farès-Drappeau 2005 p. 116 concisely expresses the major weakness with Caskel's proposal: "Cette chronologie . . . ne prend pas en considération les événements historiques de la région". Most problematic is the idea that an independent dynasty could re-emerge here in the second century AD. It is certain that nearby Hegra came under Roman control, and Dadan probably did too.

[33] Macdonald 2000 p. 33.

[34] For an overview of its linguistic features, see Kogan and Korotayev 1997.

[35] See Robin 1991 p. 98.

with some confidence. It was previously thought that the Minaeans took control of Dadan during the span of these inscriptions, but it is now considered more likely that only a trading colony was established within the pre-existing political framework.[36] Like at Tayma, a scattering of Nabataean texts then appear as we move towards the Nabataean period.[37]

The main language represented in the ancient evidence for Hegra is Nabataean.[38] Including the tomb inscriptions, they are by far the best dated group of texts, coming largely from the first century AD. A handful of Imperial Aramaic and Medhabic texts reveal the population of the town before the Nabataean period.[39] A number of Ancient North Arabian inscriptions have also been catalogued from the site, including examples of the Dadanitic, Hismaic, Thamudic B and Thamudic C dialects. Nehmé puts their combined number at 159, as opposed to the 416 Nabataean texts.[40] As with all the sites, there are very few dates represented in the Ancient North Arabian texts, most being nothing more than signatures. Nehmé draws attention to JSNab 17 and JSTam 1, two texts carved together on the Qasr el-Bint, a large rocky massif that contains a number of tomb facades.[41] The Nabataean text records a tomb built for *rqwš brt ʿbdmnwtw* and is dated to the year 162—i.e. AD 267. The 'Thamudic' text (Thamudic D according to Nehmé) runs down the right side of the Nabataean text and provides a summary. 'Thamudic' was therefore in use at Hegra in the second half of the third century AD. Nabataean certainly continued in use in the region into the fourth century. JSNab 386, on a funerary monument near Dadan, dates to AD 307, and an inscription dated to AD 356 mentions a *ryš ḥgrʾ* (chief of Hegra), showing that some kind of civic authority still existed during that period.[42]

This brief overview is far from comprehensive, and is only intended to highlight the very broadest trends of language use in the region. Nevertheless, some patterns can be revealed. Firstly, if we are to identify a 'native' script, it must be the various dialects of Old North Arabian. The chronological development of these, and the relationships between them, is still

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[36] See Winnett and Reed 1970 pp. 117–118.

[37] The biggest collection of these is still JS II.

[38] See Nehmé 2005 for an overview of Hegra's inscriptions.

[39] For the Imperial Aramaic texts, of which only one out of three is published, see Nehmé 2005 pp. 160–161. JS I pp. 250–262 includes five Medhabic texts, most of which were found at a site about two kilometres north of the town proper.

[40] Nehmé 2005 pp. 160–161.

[41] *Ibid.* pp. 171–172.

[42] Stiehl 1970.

unclear. Taymanitic, of which we have evidence from the eighth century BC, may have been the earliest to appear in the region, and Ancient North Arabian certainly persisted into the fourth or fifth century AD.

A second pattern is the appearance of Medhabic texts from the fourth to second centuries BC, at least in Hegra and Dadan. They are immediately recognisable by their frequent mentions of Ma'in and particularly their dedications to Wadd, one of the chief Minaean deities. There was certainly a temple dedicated to him in Dadan, and he and the other Minaean gods appear almost exclusively in the Medhabic texts. There are signs, however, that the Minaean colony in Dadan was not religiously exclusive. JSLih 49, for example, records a dedication to *d-ġbt*, who was the most popular deity in the Dadanitic texts, by a priest of Wadd, and itself was written in Dadanitic.[43] Jaussen and Savignac interpret it as showing that "les Liḥyanites, successeurs des Minéens, ne rejetèrent pas le dieu Wadd; ils lui rendirent un culte." As explained above, however, it is no longer necessary to view the Lihyanites simply as successors of the Minaeans at Dadan. It is just as possible that the Minaean colony was installed during the period of Lihyanite control, and that this inscription is contemporary with their colony. Indeed, the priest's name, *'bdwd*, could reveal a Minaean background, the only other instance of this name coming from the Medhabic text JSMin 59. It seems possible, therefore, that the Minaean community also came to participate in the cults of Dadan's deities that had been established before their arrival.

A third pattern is the appearance of Nabataean texts in the second and first centuries BC. They seem to appear firstly at Tayma, where we have seen that the tradition of Imperial Aramaic texts seems to have developed towards the Nabataean script. This would count against any link between the introduction of Nabataean rule and the introduction of the Nabataean script. A group of texts on the route from Hegra to Tayma also has some relevance to this question. JSNab 334, 335 and 337 are dated by Jaussen and Savignac to the second century BC on account of their script. Although they are included in the collection of Nabataean texts, the authors realised that the letter forms are not typically 'Nabataean'. It may be better to label them Imperial Aramaic. All mention a certain Mas'udu, who calls himself the king of Lihyan. These texts therefore probably date to the very end of the tradition of Dadanitic inscriptions, and may represent an attempt by Mas'udu to re-establish the Lihyanite kingdom at Hegra or Tayma. In any case,

[43] Also Farès-Drappeau 2005 D45.

it is surely significant that he chose to express himself in Aramaic, and not Dadanitic, which every Lihyanite ruler had used previously. It was first suggested that we have here a Nabataean king expressing his newfound control over the Lihyanite kingdom, but this no longer seems likely.[44] It is better to break the connection between Nabataean rule and a script, and conclude that Mas'udu chose to express himself in a language that was becoming more relevant in the region. This could have been the result of growing Nabataean influence, but, like in other areas around the kingdom, we should not see Nabataean rule as a prerequisite for the use of the Nabataean or Aramaic script.

Tayma

The oldest of our three settlements is probably Tayma. Archaeological evidence for settlement at the site may go back as far as the fourth millennium, but it is in the biblical and Assyrian sources that we start to get some idea of the character of the town.[45] One of the earliest references to Tayma comes in a record from the time of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III, who ruled during the second half of the eighth century BC, when the town was already characterised by its role in the incense trade.[46] The settlement also appears several times in the biblical sources, where it is described as part of Edom.[47] The Babylonian king Nabonidus seems to have moved here in the mid-sixth century to pursue his unorthodox religious policies. Bawden *et al.* also suggest that it was part of a much wider move to try and dominate trade routes in the region.[48] After this, there is very little mention of Tayma in literary sources. It seems that the city may have paid tribute to the Achaemenid monarch, but it probably did not form a part of any of the Hellenistic successor states.[49] There is also no surviving record of the Nabataean conquest of the area. We can

[44] Winnett and Reed 1970 p. 120 suggest that Mas'udu was an independent adventurer who was responsible for the overthrow of the Lihyanites in the second or first century BC.

[45] See Bawden *et al.* 1980 pp. 71–74 for an overview of Tayma in the historical records.

[46] See Irvine 1973 p. 290. Another very early reference, dating to the mid eighth-century BC, appears in a report of the governor of Suhu and Mari in central Mesopotamia and describes an attack he made on a caravan from Tayma and Šaba which had come into his territory. He reports that he captured one hundred men and two hundred camels along with their goods (Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990).

[47] E.g. *Ezek.* 25:13.

[48] Bawden *et al.* 1980 p. 72.

[49] *Ibid.* pp. 72–73.

assume, however, that like the Assyrians and Babylonians before them, the Nabataeans were primarily interested in consolidating their hold on the region's trade routes.

Like the other settlements in the Hijaz, the site of Tayma was only discovered and reported to the western world in the second half of the nineteenth century.[50] It was included in various epigraphic surveys of the region in the twentieth century, and came under sporadic archaeological investigation.[51] It is now the subject of a project conducted by the General Commission for Tourism and Antiquities, Riyadh, and the German Archaeological Institute, Berlin, who have conducted regular excavations since 2004.[52] The most important archaeological data to emerge from these, for our purposes, relate to a temple detected on the town's central elevation. The structure seems to have been reshaped several times, but there was certainly a temple in use here in the Nabataean period.[53] An incense burner with a Nabataean inscription was uncovered to the southwest of the building.[54]

It is, however, the Taymanitic, Imperial Aramaic and Nabataean inscriptions, carved on building blocks or into the rocks surrounding the town, that provide the greatest insight into Tayma's religious life. One Aramaic text from the town proper, whose script is in line with first century AD Nabataean texts from Hegra, has been proposed to contain a mention of either the goddess *tdh*/*trh* or the goddess *mnwh*. *CIS* has the reading:

1. *qṣr dy qrb*
2. *'zmw br rg'*
3. *ltd[r]h 'lht'*
4. *'l ḥyy[why]*[55]

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[50] For an overview of the early scholarship on Tayma, see Bawden *et al.* 1980 pp. 73–74.

[51] The first archaeological investigation of Tayma was undertaken by Philby in 1951 (1957 pp. 72–103), and was followed roughly a decade later by Winnett and Reed (1970 pp. 23–37). The Saudi department of antiquities began its own investigations in the 1970s, with the results being published in *Atlal*. The survey of Bawden *et al.* 1980 added many details as to the surface remains, as well as conducting excavations within the city walls and producing a detailed typology of the pottery.

[52] The most recent results appear in summary on the project's website: http://www.dainst.org/index_3258_en.html. Preliminary reports include Eichmann 2008, Eichmann *et al.* 2006a and Eichmann *et al.* 2006b.

[53] Eichmann *et al.* 2006a pp. 167–168.

[54] The inscription is mentioned briefly in Eichmann 2009 p. 63. See also Hausleiter 2010 p. 236 (cat. nos 109 and 110).

[55] *CIS* II 336.

qṣr that *'zmw*, son of *rg'*, dedicated to the goddess *tdh*/*trh*, for his own life.

qṣr is translated by *CIS* as *aedicula*, and it certainly seems to refer to a building of some kind.[56] The deity mentioned could be *tdh* or *trh*, as the *d* and the *r* cannot be distinguished in many Aramaic texts. G.-W. Nebe, however, has proposed an alternative reading:

1. *ḥgr' dy qrb*
2. *'zmw br rg'*
3. *lmnwh 'lht'*
4. *'l ḥyy[...*[57]

ḥgr' that *'zmw*, son of *rg'*, dedicated to the goddess Manawah, for his own life.

ḥgr' is translated as Geweihte, but there are no parallel examples.[58] Finally, Dijkstra has proposed the reading *mnh* for the divine name at the beginning of the third line.[59] Exterior evidence can be brought in to support the reading of either goddess. *tdh*/*trh* appears in one of Hegra's tomb inscriptions dated to AD 34/35, which stipulates that a fine will be payable to the goddess if anyone should contravene the rules laid out there.[60] The tomb is one of two in Hegra that was built by a Taymanite, so it seems very possible that Tayma was an important cult centre for the deity. However, another Aramaic text from Tayma itself contains a mention of *mnwh*. Discovered in 1982, it was carved on a stone basin probably used in ritual and forms a dedication to *mnwh 'lht 'lht'—mnwh*, goddess of goddesses.[61] *Mnwh* is an important deity of the region, and she also appears several times at Hegra. Datings of this text, however, place it in the second or early first century BC, and so probably preceding the Nabataean period.[62]

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[56] See *DNWSI* p. 1023.
[57] Cited in Beyer and Livingstone 1987 p. 292.
[58] See *DNWSI* p. 348.
[59] Dijkstra 1995 pp. 75–76.
[60] H 12. In this context, Healey notes the new reading of this text from Tayma by Nebe, and comments that his own examination of the photographs cannot find support for it (Healey 1993 p. 141).
[61] The inscription is published in both Livingstone *et al.* 1983 pp. 105–106 and Beyer and Livingstone 1987 pp. 290–292.
[62] Livingstone *et al.* 1983 pp. 105–106 place the text in the second century and classify the script as Aramaic. Beyer and Livigstone, however, classify the script as Nabataean, and move the text forward into the early first century BC. Both point to the forms of the letters, and it is difficult to make any firmer judgments while the epigraphic record of the town is still so sparse.

The town's other Nabataean texts do not reveal anything more specific as to its religious life. A recently published text provides evidence for a Jewish community at Tayma, although this is dated almost one hundred years after the Nabataean period.[63] Outside this, we are restricted either to texts which clearly predate the Nabataean hegemony by some time, or are found on the routes leading to the town. The above-mentioned Tayma Stone, which dates from the fifth or sixth century BC, records the introduction of *ṣlm zy ḥgm* alongside deities already present, *ṣlm zy mḥrm*, *sngl'* and *'šym'*.[64] A text in a similar script records an offering made in the temple to *ṣlm zy rb*.[65] *ṣlm* seems here to be the divine name, and *zy* introduces a topographic element that turns these into more local deities.[66] *ṣlm* seems to have gained a wide following in the area, and he is recorded in many Taymanitic texts.[67] These are, unfortunately, undated, but his absence from any Nabataean graffiti of the region suggests that his cult had faded by that period. *sngl'* and *'šym'* are not represented in the Taymanitic or other texts surrounding the town. Similarly, the Babylonian deities Nabû, Marduk, Zarpanītu, Tašmētu and Nanāya, who are mentioned in a cuneiform royal stele of Nabonidus, do not appear outside this context.[68]

More relevant for our purposes is a Nabataean text found on the outskirts of the city that reads: *'dkrwn 'ryš mn qdm dwšr' lḥymw br[h] šl[m]'*—'Remembered be *'ryš* before Dushara, for *ḥymw* his son, peace'.[69] Such a text does not, unfortunately, reveal the presence of a temple or any other building in Tayma, only the attitudes of the writer. A number of Taymanitic texts collected on the outskirts of the town contain similar information. Jaussen and Savignac's collection of 'Graffites Tamoudéens' from el-Hebou eš-Šardy, an outcrop about 10 kilometres to the south of the town, contain numerous references to *'lh* and *rḍw*. Ruḍā is regularly mentioned in 'Safaitic' and 'Thamudic' texts, and it is not entirely certain whether we

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[63] Al-Najem and Macdonald 2009. The text records the building of a *npš* of *'š'yh br ywsp* in year 98 of the province (*hprky'*), i.e. AD 203. Al-Najem and Macdonald draw attention to the Jewish background of the names and reports from the Islamic period of a Jewish presence at the oasis. They also caution, however, that personal names should not be used as firm evidence of religious preferences (p. 214).

[64] *CIS* II 113, Gibson 1975 pp. 148–151.

[65] Livingstone *et al.* 1983 pp. 108–111 and Beyer and Livingstone 1987 pp. 286–288.

[66] Maraqten 1996 discusses these deities, their possible origins and their reappearances at Tayma and elsewhere.

[67] *Ibid.* p. 21.

[68] See Schaudig and Hausleiter in Eichmann *et al.* 2006a.

[69] *CIS* II 338.

have a god or a goddess here, or both. There have been attempts to equate him/her with other deities worshipped in Nabataea, but no consensus has emerged.[70] Again we cannot be specific as to the date of these texts. It may be significant, however, that the group which Jaussen and Savignac collected at el-Hebou eš-Šardy contains no mention of the deity *ṣlm*. He does appear regularly in both Philby's and Harding's collections of texts from other areas around Tayma, where *ʿlh* and *rḍw* do not.[71] As *ṣlm* can be safely ascribed to the middle of the first millennium, then, Jaussen and Savignac's group containing *ʿlh* and *rḍw* may come from a later time closer to the Nabataean period.

Dadan

Like at Tayma, human settlement at Dadan has a long history, and its archaeological remains were also first catalogued at the end of the nineteenth century.[72] Soon the site was recognised as the Dadan of the Bible, whose inhabitants are characterised by their role in the incense trade.[73] Soon also were the two figures *mlk ddn* and *mlk lḥyn* recognised in the Dadanitic texts from the site. *mlk ddn* appears only once, in a text inscribed on a rock in a hollow formed by two fallen rocks that records his tomb.[74] Farès-Drappeau groups the text with about fifteen others that mostly come from the same area around the old station of al-ʿUla (see fig. 38). Their similar scripts allow them to be dated to the same period, and Farès-Drappeau considers them to be the earliest Dadanitic texts, dating perhaps as early as the sixth century BC.[75] *mlk lḥyn* appears several times in a later group of texts that are concentrated around al-Khuraybah, to the north of modern al-ʿUla. *Lḥyn* is not a toponym, rather the title of the political unit based in Dadan, which continued to be used to refer

[70] See Healey 2001 pp. 94–95.

[71] Harding has published a series of texts from Mantar Bani ʿAtiya, about eight kilometres north-west of Tayma (Harding in Parr *et al*. 1968–1969 pp. 40–46).

[72] See Farès-Drappeau 2005 pp. 36–44 for a summary of the scholarship on Dadan.

[73] *Is*. 21.13, for example, records: משא בערב: ביער בערב תלינו ארחות דדנים 'The burden upon Arabia: In the thickets in Arabia you shall lodge, O caravans of Dadanites.' See Farès-Drappeau 2005 pp. 49–51 for an overview of Dadan in the biblical and Mesopotamian sources.

[74] FD D33, JSLih 138 and pls LXXXVIII and CXXX for the context.

[75] Farès-Drappeau 2005 pp. 117–118. We should caution, however, that there can be very little certainty in dating these texts by script alone.

to the site.[76] Farès-Drappeau connects its rise to the disappearance of the Qedarite confederation, perhaps at the end of the fifth or during the fourth century BC.[77] The Dadanitic inscriptions then provide a record of the rulers of the oasis for roughly the next two centuries. The sole rule of the king seems to have been modified with the addition of a governor (*r'y*) who ruled alongside him. Towards the end of the kingdom, the king seems to have disappeared and the *r'y* taken power alone.[78] While the literary references reveal Dadan's role in the incense trade, these texts show that during its height the settlement also had a vigorous pastoral and agricultural sector.[79] The numerous Medhabic texts also date from this period, revealing the presence of a Minaean trading colony.[80] This must have dwindled at about the same time as Ma'in, at some point in the second century BC. The kingdom of *lḥyn* also seems to have disappeared at this point, the last mention of a *mlk lḥyn* being in the group of Aramaic inscriptions found near Hegra.[81] That Dadan came under Nabataean rule is confirmed by a tomb inscription dated to the first year of Aretas IV, and the numerous Nabataean inscriptions from the town reveal an active population in that period.[82] These continue until at least the fourth century AD.[83]

Archaeological excavations of the inhabited centres of Dadan have not yet been undertaken in earnest (fig. 38). A number of surface finds, however, and information from the inscriptions have given us some indication of the town's religious topography. Jaussen and Savignac describe a sanctuary in the ruins at al-Khuraybah.[84] In the centre of these is an immense cistern carved from a single block of sandstone, which they interpret as

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[76] See, for example FD D153, which refers to a 'governor of Dadan' and was engraved during the time of the Lihyanite kings.

[77] Farès-Drappeau 2005 p. 121.

[78] Farès-Drappeau 2005 p. 123 provides a list of all the rulers of Dadan known from the Dadanitic texts. According to her chronology, these begin with the sole rule of the *mlk* from the middle of the fourth century BC. He was then joined by the *r'y* towards the middle of the third century BC (described by Farès-Drappeau as a "haut fonctionnaire au temple" (p. 124)), who then ruled alone for a short period at the beginning of the second century BC. We should caution again that this chronology is largely based on palaeographic analysis and cannot be regarded as at all certain. There is also no specific information as to the function of the *r'y*.

[79] See, for example, *Ezek*. 27:20 for Dedan as a trade centre. See below p. 129 for its agricultural and pastoral sector.

[80] Van den Branden was the first to suggest that the Minaean colony in Dadan existed alongside the local government (1957).

[81] See above p. 120.

[82] Euting 1885 p. 71.

[83] JSNab 386

[84] JS II pp. 56–57.

having a religious function. Nearby were found statues and their bases inscribed with dedications to *d̲-ġbt*, which would have been deposited in the sanctuary.[85] That there was a temple to *d̲-ġbt* is confirmed by a number of inscriptions.[86] Similarly, the Medhabic texts reveal a number of constructions built to the gods of Ma'in.[87] The majority of these inscriptions, however, have only come to light as they were reused in later buildings, and so we do not have much sense of where the Minaean temple may have been. The summit of the mountain of Umm Daraj, to the south-west of al-Khuraybah, also held a religious site. A carved stairway, reminiscent of those we find in Hegra and Petra, leads to the top of the mountain.[88] The summit is littered with masonry and remains of old buildings, and unfortunately no clear layout of the complex emerges. A rock-cut cistern reminds us of the high-places of Petra, but there is little else carved into the mountain itself, and Nasif interprets this rather as a furnace. However, Nasif catalogued a number of monumental inscriptions and graffiti from the site, one of which mentions *d̲-ġbt*. A number of statuettes, of a type found also at al-Khuraybah, were also collected from the summit. We can conclude, therefore, that there was probably some kind of sanctuary here in the Lihyanite period where *d̲-ġbt* was worshipped, but the evidence does not allow us to be much more specific than this.

d̲-ġbt clearly had a special place in the divine landscape of Dadan. He is the recipient of far more dedications than any other deity and does not appear outside the town, suggesting a special connection with the place or the dynasty or both.[89] There have been various suggestions as to the origins of the name, and attempts to discover the meaning of the title. As *dwšr*' can be interpreted as 'He of *šr*'', *d̲-ġbt* can be interpreted as 'He of *ġbt*'. Müller, drawing on the Arabic ġābā, first proposed 'He of the forest', which seems to have gained the largest following.[90] Jaussen and Savignac, however, saw a toponym here—"Il désigne ici le Seigneur ou le Ba'al de ġâbat"—and propose various locations for ġâbat.[91] As with debates over the etymology and real 'meaning' of the name of Dushara,

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[85] FD D63—D54.

[86] Farès-Drappeau 2005 p. 90.

[87] JSMin 7 and 10, for example, mention a sanctuary (*byth*) of Wadd, the chief Minaean deity.

[88] See Nasif 1988 pp. 24–25.

[89] Farès-Drappeau 2005 pp. 80–81 gives an overview of *d̲-ġbt*. He appears no less than forty-eight times as the recipient of a dedication.

[90] Müller 1889, p. 63.

[91] JS II p. 383.

there is little chance that this question can be resolved. Even if it were, it is not at all clear how it would advance our understanding of how *d̲-ġbt* was worshipped or perceived in antiquity. We cannot be sure whether his cult continued into the Nabataean period, but the fact that he does not appear in any Nabataean texts suggests that it did not. A strong connection between the deity and the Lihyanite dynasty seems more likely in this context. Similarly, the Minaean deities that are represented in the Medhabic inscriptions do not appear in the Nabataean texts, and their cults seem to have declined with the fall of Ma'in.

When we examine the other deities present at Dadan, however, we are met with a scene more familiar to other parts of Nabataea and the Near East as a whole.[92] *Lh* appears in a text from the east of the old village of al-Dîra which mentions the dedication of statues (*h-ṣlmn*) to the god (FD D19, JSLih 61). Allat and Baalshamin, particularly popular as we will see in the Hauran, also appear here. Allat is mentioned in a Nabataean text on the northern outskirts of the oasis (JSNab 212), and a Dadanitic text near al-Khuraybah mentions a priest (*'pkl*) of the goddess *lt* (FD D76, JSLih 277). Baalshamin appears in a Dadanitic text, also from near al-Khuraybah, that seems to take the form of a religious decree rather than a dedication (FD D67, JSLih 64).[93] Also familiar from other parts of Nabataea are *hn-'ktb* or *hn-ktby* (al-Kutba) and *hn-'zy* (al-'Uzza). The latter is recorded in one Dadanitic text on a stone reused in the mosque of al-Dîra (FD D17),

[92] For a complete overview of the deities that appear in the Dadanitic texts, see Farès-Drappeau 2005 pp. 79–86. Note that this includes Dadanitic texts found outside Dadan, but does not include the Nabataean and 'Thamudic' texts from Dadan.

[93] The exact meaning of this text still remains obscure. Farès-Drappeau has the following reading and translation:

1. *B'lsmn 'ḥrm h-qrt*
2. *mn mh trqh mr't*[-h]
3. *l-Bnhy hn-'fklt*

B'lsmn a interdit la ville à celui que sa femme ensorcelle. Par *Bhny* la prêtresse.

Winnett (1937 p. 17) was the first to recognise that this was written by Bahani the *'fklt* and not *Bahâhi Hawn'afkalat*, as Jaussen and Savignac had translated. Both Winnett (*ibid.*) and Caskel (1954 pp. 81–82) interpreted *qrt* as rock, making it a specific object that was forbidden or consecrated, and translate *trqh* as 'ascend', making it forbidden that any woman should climb the rock. Farès-Drappeau's translation as "ensorcelle" seems by no means certain, and she cannot produce an ancient parallel. According to Niehr 2003 p. 282, however, the reading of "rock" makes no sense in the context of the inscription. Maraqten 2000 p. 274 prefers "Bezirk". The relationship between the first two lines and the third is also not entirely clear, as they are written in slightly different scripts. Caskel interprets the preposition in the third line as "Das bezieht sich auf" rather than 'by'.

and may also appear on a text from al-Khuraybah.[94] *hn-'ktb* is more widespread, appearing in dedications from al-Dîra (FD D20, JSLih 62) and al-Khuraybah (FD D44, JSLih 37), and another text reveals that there was a priesthood to the deity in Dadan (FD D14, JSLih 55). Jaussen and Savignac recognised that the context required a divine name in these texts, but it was Strugnell who made the link with al-Kutba elsewhere in Nabataea.[95] Milik and Teixidor later recorded Kutba in a text from Petra.[96] There is still disagreement over the gender of the deity in the Nabataean texts, but in the Dadanitic texts he appears only as a god.[97] We can see, then, that Dadan was home to several deities that later appear in other parts of Nabataea. That these cults continued here into the Nabataean period must unfortunately remain uncertain. Only Allat is recorded in the Nabataean texts from the site.

A closer look at some dedications from Dadan reveals the importance of agriculture and pastoralism to the settlement's economy. FD D119 is typical of a series of texts recording offerings to *d̲-ġbt*:

1. *. . .] bn [. . .*
2. *'ẓll h-ẓll b-*
3. *Khl l-d̲-ġbt*
4. *b'd nḫl-h b-Bdr*
5. *f-rḍ-h w-' nḫrt-h*

. . .] son of [. . .] has offered the sacrifice, in *Khl*, for *d̲-ġbt*, in favour of his harvest of dates in *Bdr*. So he may favour him and guide him.

Dates seem to have been a particularly popular crop, but many texts ask simply for a favourable spring or winter harvest. FD D128 mentions a certain *''mtlh* daughter of *Ḍmr'* who offers a sacrifice 'in favour of his

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[94] FD 43, JSLih 43. The inscription is damaged at both sides of each line, and Jaussen and Savignac only mention al-'Uzza as a possibility. The verb following formula *f-rḍt-h* (She has been satisfied with him . . .) is feminine singular, at least suggesting a goddess here.

[95] Jaussen and Savignac concluded that *Hâni'kâtib* appears to be "une appellation divine ou le nom d'un héros divinisé" that signifies "serviteur de l'ecrivain" (JS II p. 403). Winnett recognised *han-* as the definite article, but took *'ktb* to mean 'writer' (Winnett 1937 pp. 16–18). Strugnell recognised the divine name, and then used this to identify al-Kutba in the Nabataean texts from 'Ayn esh-Shallaleh in Wadi Rumm and Tell esh-Shuqafiyeh in Egypt (Strugnell 1959).

[96] Milik and Teixidor 1961. See above p. 104, no. 20.

[97] For an overview of al-Kutba in Nabataea and the debate over gender, see Healey 2001 pp. 120–124. That *ktb* is masculine in Dadan is shown by the formula *f-rḍy* in the masculine singular (FD D44).

abundant pasturage, in *Tymm'*, showing the importance of pastoralism. The exact nature of the sacrifice (*h-ẓll*) is usually not specified, although sometimes this may refer to a camel.[98] Also common was the offering of statues (*ṣlm*) to the deities, and fragments of several of these have been collected.[99]

Such formulae do not find immediate parallels in Nabataea, but a closer look at some of Dadan's other religious terminology reveals a scene not too far removed from elsewhere in the kingdom. There seem to have been three priestly titles used in the city. The most common was *slḥ*, or *slḥt* in the feminine, which is just as common.[100] Along with *qymh*, of which there are only two attestations, these titles are specific to the cult of *d̲-ġbt*. His priests are either a *slḥ* or *qymh*, and the officials of other cults never take either title. Neither title is attested in other parts of Nabataea. The only other priestly title from Dadan is *'pkl* / *'pklt*, who are attested in the service of *Wd*, *h-Ktby*, *Lt* and possibly *B'lsmn*.[101] The title has a long history in the Near East, perhaps going back to Sumerian texts, and is attested several times in Nabataea, including at Hegra.[102] The Hegran text does not show the *'pkl* as attached to a particular deity, but in the Wadi Rumm there is one attached to the cult of Allat.[103] Another term with a perhaps more specific connection to the religious language used in Nabataea is *'rb'w*, used to describe some kind of religious construction.[104] The more common term in the Dadanitic texts is *bt*, which is common all over the Near East. Nehmé has analysed the use of similar terms in Nabataea, where *'rb'n'* appears once and *rb't'* seven times.[105] She concludes that *'rb'n'* refers to some kind of large cult building, partly because its only attestation appears on a lintel block, and *rb't'* to a smaller structure, probably a bed dedicated to a particular deity in a banqueting chamber.[106] While the

[98] That is at least the suggestion of Farès-Drappeau 2005 pp. 92–94.
[99] For the offering of statues see *ibid.* p. 94.
[100] For an overview of the priestly titles from Dadan see *ibid.* pp. 89–90.
[101] FD D45, D14, D76 and D67 respectively.
[102] See *DNWSI* pp. 95–96.
[103] Savignac 1933 pp. 411–412, no. 2. The title also appears at both Palmyra and Hatra (see *DNWSI* pp. 95–96).
[104] FD D105. That this refers to some kind of construction here is made clear by the context: *x* son of *x* built (*bnyw*) the *'rb'w*.
[105] Nehmé 2003c.
[106] *Ibid.* pp. 23–25.

term is relatively frequent in Nabataea, it does not appear elsewhere in the Near East with this meaning.[107]

This overview of the religious material from Dadan, then, has allowed us to draw several parallels between the town and other parts of Nabataea. Outside *d̲-ġbt*, the deities attested here are those we find elsewhere in the Near East, and *hn-ktby* only appears here and elsewhere in Nabataea. The same priestly title seems also to have been used in these cults, as do the terms for some religious constructions. There is, of course, much that makes the religious world of Dadan unique. *d̲-ġbt* only appears here, and the numerous dedications asking for successful harvests provide a unique insight into the agricultural economy of the region. Some of the terminology in these, particularly the enigmatic *ẓll*, is also without clear comparisons. The greatest difficulties, however, remain chronological. It is possible that cult of *d̲-ġbt* declined with the rulers of Dadan, but there is no need to see a similar decline in the other cults. Unfortunately, none of their dedications are dated. The dates ascribed by modern scholars are based almost entirely on palaeographical grounds. As we have seen, even when a text includes the name of a ruler it cannot be accurately dated, as we have no external data to anchor any reconstructed timeline. Similarly, even if a very clear palaeographical development can be established, which it so far cannot, there is likewise no external data to anchor this. None of the Dadanitic texts, therefore, can be accurately dated. In any case, we can safely say that the town was inhabited in the Nabataean period, and there is no reason to suppose a major disruption in religious practices and beliefs, apart from perhaps a decline in the cult of *d̲-ġbt*.

Hegra

While Dadan and Tayma were still occupied in the Nabataean period, it is Hegra (fig. 39) that was clearly the most important centre in southern Nabataea. The site was known to some Classical authors, although there is little precise or consistent information.[108] al-Ḥijr is more frequently

[107] The closest parallel is an inscription from a tomb at Palmyra, where it seems certain to refer to an alcove or part of the tomb (*PAT* 0562).

[108] See Healey 1993 pp. 25–31 and Nehmé *et al.* 2006 p. 43 for an overview of these. Strabo (*Geog.* 16.4.24) mentions the village of Egra (Ἔγρα) "in the territory of Obodas, situated by the sea"—perhaps a different settlement altogether or a confused location. Pliny (*HN* 6.157) records a *Haegra* and a *Domata* (Dumatha/al-Jawf) in the territory of the

mentioned in Arabic sources, where it is particularly associated with the tribe of Thamud. The site's modern name, Meda'in Salih, derives from a connection with the prophet Salih, who is reported in the Koran to have preached to the people of Thamud. Doughty was the first western visitor to the site in 1876, and he soon recognised the importance of the long Nabataean texts inscribed on the site's many tomb facades.[109] The site was then the focus for the several expeditions to the area around the turn of the century.[110] It was not until the 1960s, however, that Hegra was subjected to any archaeological excavation, with brief surveys by the Saudi Department of Antiquities and then a team from the University of London.[111] In 1978 a team from the French Institut Géographique National took a series of aerial photographs and other recordings to produce a detailed map of the site, although these have not been published.[112] A small series of excavations was begun in 1986 by the Department of Antiquities, with the results appearing in *Atlal*.[113] More recently, this has been joined by a French team, and now under the direction of Laïla Nehmé and François Villeneuve Hegra has been excavated since 2001.[114]

There is much still to be excavated and discovered, therefore, by archaeologists working at Hegra. The investigations have confirmed that the site had a history of human settlement stretching back well before the Nabataean period, and continued to be occupied long after.[115] A recently discovered Latin text provides the clearest evidence that Hegra was incorporated into the Roman Empire with the rest of Nabataea, and a number of Greek texts also provide evidence for the Roman military presence in the region.[116] The tomb inscriptions also allow us an insight into the history of Hegra in the Nabataean period. Of the thirty-six inscriptions, thirty-three contain dates, and all but one of these fall between

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Avalitae who adjoin the *Nabataei*, but gives no further details. Ptolemaeus also records an Ἔγρα, but he places it in southern Arabia (εὐδαίμον Ἀραβία) (6.7.29).

109 Doughty 1888.

110 For a detailed overview of the early investigations of Hegra see Nehmé *et al.* 2006 p. 46.

111 Parr *et al.* 1971 pp. 23–26.

112 See Nehmé *et al.* 2006 pp. 46–47 for details of this survey. Each of the site's tombs and funerary chambers was given a number (IGN*), and these are used most frequently in the recent publications.

113 E.g. al-Ansary *et al.* 1989.

114 See most recently Nehmé *et al.* 2010.

115 Nehmé *et al.* 2006 pp. 67–69.

116 See Nehmé 2008 for an overview of Hegra's history after the Nabataean period.

1 BC/AD and AD 74/75.[117] As a Nabataean town, then, Hegra clearly flourished in the first century AD. The inscriptions also provide an insight into the government of the settlement, with several officials being mentioned. There is one mention of a *qnṭryn*, one of a *klyrk*, six of a *hprk'* and six of a *'srtg'*. Although these military and civilian titles are all taken from Greek or Latin, the meaning and responsibilities of these posts in a Nabataean context is very unclear.[118] The relative abundance of the titles has led to the frequent characterisation of Hegra as a heavily militarised border town.[119] While a military presence is certainly revealed, we must bear in mind that such a concentration of texts has no parallels in Nabataea, and it may be that the situation is Hegra is not at all unusual. The importance of Hegra in the region and within Nabataea as a whole, however, is confirmed by a coin which carries the name of the city. Only one specimen has so far been found, but it is the only example of a city being named on a Nabataean coin. The obverse carries the bust of Aretas IV, and Meshorer suggests that the coin may commemorate the founding of the city.[120] It is clear that Hegra was the most important centre of the region in the Nabataean period, and its inscriptions and rock-cut monuments allow us our most detailed insight into the region's religious life.

Tomb Inscriptions

Hegra is most famous in scholarship for its tomb inscriptions. These immediately attracted the attention of early explorers, and have more recently been the subject of a monograph by John Healey.[121] It was soon recognised that the texts are essentially legal, providing a number of conditions

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[117] The earliest is H 8 (the ninth year of Aretas IV), the latest H 22 (the fifth year of Rabbel II). The only text outside this range is the Nabataean—'Thamudic' inscription associated with a tomb and dated to AD 267 (Nehmé 2005 pp. 171–172).

[118] *qnṭryn* (H 31:1) is based on κεντυρίων, derived in turn from *centurio*. It is found once else in Hegra (Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 185–186). *klyrk* (H 29:2), derived from χιλίαρχος, is found in only one other text from Nabataea (see Healey 1993 pp. 198–199). *'srtg'* (στρατηγός) is more widespread, as well as being used by Josephus to refer to Nabataean leaders, and is usually considered a civilian post in the Nabataean context (Healey 1993 pp. 108–109). *hprk'* (from either ἵππαρχος or ὕπαρχος) could perhaps then be the chief military post (see in general Negev 1976a pp. 223–227). That the *hprk'* and the *'srtg'* had separate areas of responsibility is confirmed by H 38, a text commissioned by a *hprk'* which specifies that any fines incurred for a violation of the tomb should be paid to the *'srtg'*.

[119] E.g. Bowersock 1983 p. 57.

[120] Meshorer 1975 pp. 53–54.

[121] Healey 1993.

for the use of the tomb and specifying penalties for anyone who should transgress these. A fairly typical example would be H8 (fig. 40):

1. *dnh qbr' dy 'bd 'ydw br kh[y]lw br*
2. *'lksy lnpš wyldh w'ḥrh wlm[n dy ynpq by]dh*
3. *ktb tqp mn yd 'ydw qym lh wlmn d[y yntn wyqbr b]h*
4. *'ydw bḥywhy byrḥ nysn šnt tš[' lḥrtt] mlk*
5. *nbṭw rḥm 'mh wl'nw dwšr' wmnwtw wqyš*
6. *kl mn dy yzbn kpr' dnh 'w yzbn 'w yrhn 'w yntn 'w*
7. *ywgr 'w yt'lp 'lwhy ktb klh 'w yqbr bh 'nwš*
8. *lhn lmn dy 'l' ktyb wkpr' wktbh dnh ḥrm*
9. *kḥlyqt ḥrm nbṭw wšlmw l'lm 'lmyn*

This is the tomb which 'Aydu son of Kuha[y]lu son of Alkasi made for himself and his children and his descendants and for who[ever produces in his h]and a deed of entitlement from the hand of 'Aydu, valid for him, and for who[ever 'Aydu during his lifetime grants permission to bury in] it. In the month of Nisan, the nin[th year of Haretat], King of the Nabataeans, lover of his people. And may Dushara and Manotu and Qaysha curse anyone who sells this tomb or buys it or gives it in pledge or makes a gift of it or leases it or draws up for himself any document concerning it or buries in it anyone apart from those inscribed above. And the tomb and this inscription are inviolable according to the nature of inviolability among the Nabataeans and Salamians for ever and ever.[122]

Like the others, this text appears above the door to the tomb. Rights could also be specified for individual burial niches within the tomb, where a few much shorter texts appear.[123] The careful treatment of the dead has a long history in the Near East, and Healey has drawn out parallels between Nabataea and the Late Bronze Age Ugarit in this respect.[124]

The design of the tombs has inevitably drawn much comparison with Petra, but such a collection of texts finds no parallel there.[125] Khairy, followed by Nehmé, has suggested that Hegra's position on the borders of Nabataea may explain why the tombs here are inscribed. Owners may have been rather less confident in the Nabataean legal system here at the edge of the kingdom, and so may have felt the need to set their rights

[122] I follow here the text and translation of Healey. The lacunae in the second, third and fourth lines can be reconstructed with certainty as they are still intact in JSNab 8. The damage seems to have been sustained by a gunshot.

[123] E.g. H 13: "This is the burial niche which Hagaru made for Maslamu, her brother, and for Mahmiyyat, her aunt. Let it not be opened over them for ever."

[124] Healey 1993 p. 38.

[125] For the 'anonymity' of tombs at Petra, see above p. 79.

in stone.[126] There are also some tombs without inscription at Hegra, but this seems to be merely a matter of size. Only the smaller tombs are found without inscriptions.[127] Further information on the society of Hegra from the inscriptions is harder to obtain. There seems to be little link between the size of the tomb and the position held by the owner, and similarly there is no link to be found between the number of occupants mentioned on the façade and the number of burial niches inside.[128] One trend that can be demonstrated is that the earlier tombs contain the most burial places, suggesting a history of reuse by the same family throughout the first century AD and perhaps beyond.[129] Along with the official titles that appear, then, the tomb inscriptions can tell us something about the social structure of Hegra. As is evident from the above example, however, they are a more useful source for the religious life of the town.

One role of the deities here is apotropaic, and we see them being called on to curse anyone who should mistreat the tomb in eleven of the texts.[130] Invoking deities for the protection of a tomb is not unusual in the ancient world.[131] Unique in Nabataea, however, is such a concentrated record of deities. Dushara is clearly pre-eminent here, appearing in all but one of the eleven occasions where deities are invoked.[132] His supreme position is again suggested in H 11, where we hear that "Dushara, the god of our lord, and all gods" are to curse anyone who removes a certain Wushuh from his tomb. He is sometimes invoked alone, and when he appears alongside other deities he is always mentioned first. As well as *'lh mr'n'* (H 11 and H 28), Dushara is also once labelled simply *dwšr' 'lh'* (H 30), and in

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126 Khairy 1980 p. 165; Nehmé 2003b pp. 253–254.

127 Nehmé 2005 p. 167, where she points out that it may not have been so easy for an owner of a smaller tomb to afford a scribe.

128 See Nehmé 2004 pp. 650–653. Only one pattern seems to emerge, that the lowest social rank does not have the most impressive sort of tomb, but there is no strong correlation between social class and tomb size.

129 Nehmé 2005 pp. 165–166. The average number of funerary structures in tombs dated to the reign of Aretas IV is c. 10, while it is 7.6 for the reign of Malichus II and 2.8 for that of Rabbel II.

130 Healey 1993 p. 252 provides a useful summary of these.

131 There are some close parallels from Asia Minor, where the gods are also called on to protect the tomb (Strubbe 1991 pp. 45–47).

132 H 2 should also be mentioned here. Written inside a tomb between two burial places, it invokes a deity called *prš lyly' mn ymm'* ('he who separates night from day') to curse anyone who disrupts them. Healey notes that the divine title finds parallels in the Peshitta (Gen. 1.4, 1.14 and 1.18) and the Targums (Onkelos Gen 1.14) and that it has been suggested by others that the dedicator was a Jew. However, he draws attention to the fact that Dushara is mentioned on the tomb's façade, and so concludes that this is a title of the god, and that it "reflects the planetary or solar character of Dushara" (Healey 1993 p. 84).

another text we hear of *dwšr' wmtbh* (Dushara and his throne) (H 16). Dushara's throne also appears twice on the Turkmaniyeh Tomb in Petra (once simply *mwtbh* and once *mwtbh ḥryš'* (his sacred throne)), and it has been suggested that the trapezoidal bases that a carved underneath some of Petra's idol blocks could be intended to represent this.[133] Religious importance being attached to a deity's throne is not unusual in the Near Eastern context.[134]

It is not only Dushara, however, who is called on in Hegra's tomb inscriptions. *'lt*, *hblw*, *mnwtw* and *qyš'* appear alongside him. Allat appears only once, in H 16, where she is called *'lt mn 'mnd* (Allat from *'mnd*). *'mnd* is usually taken as a place name, although Starcky suggests it could also be that of a temple, but there is little evidence as to where this might be.[135] The goddess is found widely elsewhere in Nabataea, and is particularly associated with the Hauran and Wadi Rumm.[136] The other deities (*mnwtw*, *qyš'*, *hblw*) are only found in this part of Nabataea. H 16 also contains the only mention of Hubalu in Hegra, and he does not appear outside this anywhere in Nabataea.[137] The goddess Manotu is more popular, appearing in five texts. She also appears in several of the Nabataean texts collected by Jaussen and Savignac around Hegra, but apart from this she only appears in Nabataea in the text referred to above from Tayma.[138] Healey has drawn attention to her close association here with Dushara: "It is surely significant that in four out of the five [inscriptions] Manotu immediately follows Dushara and in three of the four no other deity is mentioned".[139] The link also appears in a text collected by Jaussen and Savignac.[140] Very closely associated with Manotu herself is the deity Qaysha. He appears only once on his own, in H 36, where we learn that there was a temple to the deity in Hegra (*byt qyš'*). In H 8 and H 16, we hear of *mnwtw*

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133 For a detailed review of the discussion of Dushara's *mwtb*, see Healey 2001 pp. 158–159. See also above text no. 9, p. 96.

134 See, for example, Philonenko 1993.

135 Starcky 1966 col. 1002.

136 For the Hauran, see ch. 5 below. Two texts from Wadi Rumm associate her with a particular place. The first with Wadi Rumm itself, naming her "the great goddess who is in Iram" (*'lht' rbt' dy b'rm*) (Savignac and Horsfield 1935 no. 1), the second with Bosra, naming her "the goddess who is in Bosra" (*'lht' dy bbṣr'*) (Savignac 1933 no. 2).

137 Milik (reported in Starcky 1966 col. 998) had reconstructed the name of the deity in one of the Nabataean texts from Puteoli, but Lacerenza does not find the word (Lacerenza 1988–89 pp. 123–125). See also Healey 2001 pp. 127–132.

138 See above p. 123. There was also a cult of Manawat in Palmyra, where she is closely associated with Bel-Hamon (Kaizer 2002 pp. 108–116).

139 Healey 2001 p. 133.

140 JSNab 184.

wqyšh, but he appears nowhere else in Nabataea. Healey notes that *qyš'* and *qyšh* may simply be orthographic variants of the divine name, but he chooses to translate *mnwtw wqyšh* as 'Manotu and her Qaysha'.[141] Other suggestions have been that we have here a noun—'spouse' or 'measure'—rather than a divine name, but these are more difficult to reconcile with the *byt qyš'*.[142] If we accept a specific relationship between Manotu and Qaysha, then any such connection between Manotu and Dushara at Hegra also becomes more difficult to maintain. It may simply be best to see *qyš'* and *qyšh* as different forms of the divine name. One more deity must be mentioned here. *trhy* or *tdhy* appears in H 12, where she is to act as the recipient of a fine of one hundred Sela's from anyone who mistreats the tomb.[143] We have seen that the deity might also appear in a dedication from Tayma, where she would be specified as a goddess.[144] The fact that this tomb was built by a family from Tayma could suggest, then, that the deity was particularly popular there. She appears alone in this inscription, and it is the only example of a tomb inscription to mention the gods but not to include Dushara. He does, however, appear in a text inside the tomb (H 11). Healey notes that the fine to be paid to the goddess is unusually low, and suggests that this may be because her temple was in Tayma and so could not demand a higher price.[145] The fine payable to the king, however, is equally small, suggesting that this may be more a reflection of the position of Taymanites in Hegran society than anything else. In any case, as far as our evidence goes, the deity only had a cult following in this part of Nabataea, and this is the same for Manotu, Hubalu and Qaysha. Outside Dushara and Allat, then, the deities that are attested in Hegra's tomb inscriptions have a distinctly local significance.

The other role of the deities in these texts is as the recipients of fines alongside the king or a local official.[146] H 34 is a good example:

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141 Healey 1993 pp. 119–120; 2001 pp. 136–137.

142 E.g. Starcky 1966 col. 1001.

143 There has been some uncertainty over the reading of the name here. *CIS* II 205 reads *'lhy*, but Jaussen and Savignac recognised the first letter as *t* (JSNab 12). The final letter is certainly *y*, and Healey concludes with some certainty that we have here a mention of *tdhy*/*trhy* (Healey 1993 p. 138).

144 See above p. 122.

145 Healey 1993 p. 142.

146 H 38 has fines payable to the king and "the governor who is in Hegra" (*'srtg' dy hw' bḥgr'*). H 16 has fines payable to Dushara, Hubalu and Manotu, and to a priest (*'pkl'*), but not to the king.

10. *. . . wmn y‘bd*
11. *k‘yr dy ‘l’ dy ’yty ‘lwhy ḥty’h*
12. *ldwšr’ wmnwtw ksp sl‘yn ’lp ḥd ḥrty*
13. *wlmr’n’ rb’l mlk nbṭw kwt . . .*

And whoever does other than what is above will be liable for a fine to Dushara and Manotu in the sum of one thousand Haretite Sela’s and to our lord Rabel, King of the Nabataeans, for the same amount.[147]

The specifying of fines is more unusual in the Near Eastern context than the invoking of deities, although Healey notes parallels from further afield.[148] The fines were presumably payable to the temples or priesthoods of these deities in Hegra. Dushara is again here the most important deity, being a recipient of the fine in all those occasions where one is specified apart from H 12, where it is *tdhy*/*trhy*. Hubalu and Manotu are also specified, but only alongside Dushara. There is so far no sign of such temples in Hegra, and we have little detail as to how funds would be used, but there is one important parallel from Petra. A fragmentary text from the Temple of the Winged Lions seems to set out some of the conditions for the funding of the temple.[149] It records that a certain portion of wealth, in the form of silver, gold, offerings, provisions or coin, ought to be given to the priests. There are close linguistic parallels with the tomb inscriptions. It records that payments will have to be made by those who have not met the conditions: “Concerning the one who did other than all of that which is written above” (*‘lwhy dy ‘bd k‘yr kl dy ‘l’ ktyb*).[150] Very similar phraseology is used in Hegra.[151] Presumably, then, similar arrangements may also have been in place for supplying temple revenues in Hegra, and likewise the legal documents concerning the tombs of Petra may have specified fines payable to the city’s deities.

The tomb inscriptions also offer some more specific information as to the temples of Hegra. H 36 records that a copy of the text has been deposited in the temple of Qaysha (*byt qyš’*). The same process is recorded in

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147 The Haretite Sela is clearly a unit of Nabataean currency. Schmitt-Korte and Price consider that the currency was named after Aretas III, who seems to have been the first king to mint coins (Schmitt-Korte and Price 1994 pp. 128–129). They also suggest that the *s* and the *ḥ* that appear together on many issues are an abbreviation for *sl‘ ḥrtt* ‘Haretite Sela’ (p. 90–93).

148 Healey 1993 pp. 47–48.

149 Hammond *et al.* 1986. See above p. 93, no. 6.

150 *Ibid.* p. 78.

151 See, for example, H 1: “And whoever does other than what is written above” (*wmn dy y‘bd k‘yr mh dy ‘l’ ktyb*).

one of the papyri of the Babatha Archive, where we hear that a copy of the text has been deposited in the Aphrodesion in Petra.[152] One other piece of religious information in the tomb texts concerns inviolability (*ḥrm*). Twice we hear that a tomb is "inviolable according to the nature of inviolability among the Nabataeans and Salamians for ever" (*ḥrm kḥlyqt ḥrm nbṭw wšlmw l'lm*) (H 1 and H 8), and once that the tomb "is inviolable according to the nature of inviolability of what is inviolably consecrated to Dushara among the Nabataeans and Salamians (*ḥrm kḥlyqt ḥrm' dy mḥrm ldwšr' bnbṭw wšlmw*) (H 19).[153] Healey considers this to be the "full "theology" of inviolability—it is a matter of the sanctity of what is sacred to the main Nabataean god, Dushara".[154] The root appears several times in a Nabataean context, particularly in the form *mḥrmt'* which is used for a sanctuary or a reserved place.[155] Presumably, then, tombs in Nabataea were regarded as *ḥrm*, although it does not seem necessary that Dushara should be involved in all these cases. Wenning suggests that the principle could have been extended to rock-cut sanctuaries, and considers that the Jebel Ithlib (see below) and its concentration of monuments would have "formed a kind of natural ḥaram or ḥimā", a large sacred precinct.[156]

The Religious Monuments

The Jebel Ithlib contains the greatest concentration of the religious material that survives from Hegra.[157] In her recent survey, Nehmé can record only nine cultic monuments that appear outside this.[158] The Jebel stands to the north-west of the site a kilometre or so from the residential zone, on the other side of the Qasr el-Bint where many of the tombs are

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[152] Lewis 1989 pp. 48–49. The Aphrodesion is mentioned in an extract from council minutes, but we should note that these date from just after the Nabataean period (see above p. 58).

[153] For the Salamians see Healey 1993 p. 73.

[154] Healey 1993 p. 168.

[155] *DNWSI* p. 615. One example is from al-Jawf, mentioned above n. 1. Another comes from Puteoli, where we find a *mḥrmt'* being restored during the reign of Aretas IV (*CIS* II 158; Cooke 1903 pp. 256–257).

[156] Wenning 1996 p. 260. This was also suggested in JS I p. 126. On the *ḥaram* more generally see Gawlikowski 1982.

[157] See Nehmé *et al.* 2006 pp. 91–96 for a recent survey of the Jebel Ithlib. She remarks that during the survey fifty-five previously unpublished monuments were recorded out of a total of seventy-nine.

[158] *Ibid.* p. 90: "Il s'agit soit de bétyles associés à des tombes, soit de niches taillées sur des massifs de rocher qui se dressent à l'intérieur de la zone résidentielle définie par le rempart, soit enfin de petits sanctuaires indépendants".

concentrated. The mountain is split by a narrow gorge, in many ways similar to Petra's Siq, although much shorter, which leads through the centre. On either side, as elsewhere around the Jebel, niches and idol blocks are carved into the mountainsides, and a large cultic chamber, the Diwan, stands at the entrance. The niches are carved individually or arranged in what may have formed small sanctuaries, sometimes accompanied with signatures. In at least two places, although both outside the Jebel Ithlib, there are groups of installations that appear to form 'high-places'. Unlike the tomb inscriptions, then, there are plentiful parallels from Petra for the monuments here, and it is usually against the background of the Nabataean capital that the religious monuments of Hegra are approached.

The most impressive monument of Hegra is the Diwan, a large cultic chamber at the entrance to the 'Siq' of the Jebel Ithlib (fig. 41). It takes the same form as the many triclinia of Petra, with benches arranged around three sides. The other side is completely open to the air, leading to suggestions that crowds outside the chamber may have been able to join in with rituals.[159] No inscription is particularly associated with the chamber (although there are some deities mentioned nearby), so we have no indication if the Diwan was used by a particular *mrzḥ* or in honour of a particular deity. This has led to the suggestion that the chamber was used by a number of different associations.[160] As the Jebel Ithlib contains no other major cultic chamber, use of the Diwan would have been somehow apportioned among Hegra's cults. The Diwan, however, is not entirely unique in the city. Nehmé mentions two other unpublished banqueting chambers, although they are smaller and open to the air, and more have recently been recorded. One is found in the interior of the Jebel Ithlib, and the other on the summit of a smaller rocky outcrop to the south-east labelled "la colline stèles et graf" by Jaussen and Savignac.[161] In both these cases, the triclinium is associated with other cultic monuments, but no one deity or group can be particularly linked with the installation.

The niches and idol blocks of Hegra, although much less in number, have so far not been published in as systematic a manner as Dalman's

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[159] Healey 1986 p. 112.

[160] E.g. Wenning 1996 p. 261 suggests that two graffiti from the chamber, one of which mentions a governor and another a mason, may be representative of the different groups that used the chamber. Such mentions of a profession are found elsewhere in Hegra, however, and these graffti are not enough to allow us to conclude that groups of worshippers could be organised along professional lines, as we know to be the case at Petra (see above p. 78).

[161] See Nehmé *et al.* 2006 p. 92.

catalogue of Petra. From the descriptions that have been made, however, it is clear that they show a similar variety to those of Petra. Idol blocks appear outside niches, in plain niches, and in niches with more complex architectural decoration. Similarly, there are differently shaped blocks, and they can appear in groups or be isolated from other monuments. More unusual are the series of niches reported recently by Nehmé *et al.* near the summit of "la colline stèles et graf". Here, there are eleven niches carved onto the horizontal surface of the rock, four of which contain idol blocks (fig. 42).[162] In one of these, two small canals lead away from an empty niche, and it is suggested that the niche may have served as a holder for libations during rituals.[163] Nehmé *et al.* consider that the empty troughs could have received portable idol blocks, but we should also mention the possibility that such troughs were considered idol blocks in themselves. The arrangement of these structures on a horizontal surface is explained by the absence of any sizeable vertical faces at the top of the hill.[164] It must, however, have affected how rituals were performed.

Two arrangements loosely resembling the 'high-places' of Petra have been so far documented at Hegra.[165] They are both situated on smaller hills isolated from the Jebel Ithlib. The first, on one of the hills to the south of Ithlib, was labelled "Sanctuaire?" by Jaussen and Savignac.[166] Both Healey and Wenning agreed that it had a religious function, and this has been followed by Nehmé *et al.*, who provide the most complete description.[167] The summit holds a series of carved troughs and canals, which Nehmé

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[162] *Ibid.* 2006 pp. 99–101, fig. 63. These eleven monuments take one of four different basic forms: a simple empty niche; two empty niches, one bigger than the other; a simple empty niche with an idol block and a double niche with an idol block. They are arranged into four smaller groups on different parts of the platform.

[163] *Ibid.* p. 100. The arrangement, Ith77k, is of the type with two empty niches. The smaller niche has two narrow canals leading from its top corners "peut-être pour évacuer le liquid excédentaire".

[164] *Ibid.* p. 101.

[165] Healey considered there to be a third inside the Jebel Ithlib and included a "High Place" in his map of the interior of the hill, but mentioned no further details (Healey 1986 pl. 109). The "High Place" received more attention in Healey 1993, where it is described as comprising a set of steps leading to a small plateau with niches and a prominent idol block (p. 10). However, as Wenning has pointed out, this hardly resembles 'high-places' as we know them from Petra: "it is hardly a High Place as suggested by Healey; there are no cultic installations" (Wenning 1996 p. 264).

[166] JS I pl. III.

[167] Healey 1986 p. 113; Wenning 1996 p. 267; Nehmé *et al.* 2006 pp. 96–98. It is worth noting that Nehmé does not classify this as a 'high-place' (*ibid.* p. 103), perhaps because the hill is only four or five metres high and there are relatively few cultic monuments on the summit.

et al. suggest could have held libations.[168] Firmer evidence for cultic activity comes from the room hollowed from the base of the hill. The walls hold a variety of niches, some containing troughs which could have been used to hold portable idol blocks. Three inscriptions have also been recovered from the tomb, but these do not allow us any insight into the rituals performed here.[169] A smaller secondary chamber holds what appears to be a burial niche. Attaching a burial chamber to a cult chamber would be unusual, but Nehmé *et al.* point out that this may be a later addition.[170] The second 'high-place' sits above the horizontal niches on the summit of "La colline stèles et graf", to the south-east of the Jebel Ithlib. The niches seem to form part of a 'processional way', familiar from Petra, which leads to the installations on the summit. Here, there is an open air triclinium as well as a series of troughs carved into the surface and other monuments whose function cannot be determined.[171]

This brief overview of the rock-cut monuments of Hegra, then, provides many parallels with those of Petra. The differences, it seems, can be largely attributed to the restrictions of Hegra's topography or to the fact that these monuments seem to have been in use over a much shorter time, according them a more 'temporary' feel. The monuments are more concentrated, largely being restricted to the Jebel Ithlib, as there is not the network of wadis that surrounds Petra. Niches and idol blocks even had to be carved on horizontal surfaces, as there were not enough vertical faces. Similarly, there was not enough space for triclinia to be carved inside the rock, and so worshippers were restricted to carving only the benches on the available horizontal surfaces. We have seen that the construction of monumental tombs stops abruptly in AD 74/75, and this may also be reflected in the religious monuments. A number of texts from the Jebel Ithlib record an individual taking possession of a place or spot on the rock face, presumably for use later to carve a monument.[172] As the owners

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168 Nehmé *et al.* 2006 p. 98.

169 These are JSNab 159–161. The first was restored by Jaussen and Savignac as reading *ṣnm šʿdʾlhy XX [l]hprkyʾ* (Statue of Šaʿdʾallahy, the twentieth year of the Eparchy [AD 126]), and led to the suggestion that the chamber was devoted to a god called Šaʿdʾallahy, whose statue was set up in one of the niches. Recently, however, the inscription has been revisited, and the new reading (*šlm šʿdʾlhy*. . .) contains no hint of a statue of a divinity (Nehmé *et al.* 2006 p. 96).

170 Nehmé *et al.* 2006 p. 98.

171 *Ibid.* p. 102.

172 The formula *ʾtr dy ʾḫd x* ('the place that *x* took possession of'), or a variation, was used for this (see Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 204–214). A good example is JSNab 83, where the text is carved nearby a series of lines and rectangles carved in the rock face. Nehmé

never returned to take advantage of the place they had claimed, it seems that there was a sudden interruption in the use of the Jebel Ithlib and that the owners may have only visited the site in passing. Nehmé *et al.* draw attention to "la rapidité d'exécution de ces œuvres" in support of this.[173]

The similarities with Petra, as well as the variety and groupings of the town's idol blocks, suggest broadly similar patterns of worship were played out around Hegra's rock-cut monuments. Much of this was clearly organised around the *mrzḥ'*, who must have been responsible for many of the idol blocks and triclinia, and whose members are revealed in the lists of names that often accompany the latter.[174] The monuments, then, are primarily the result of small private initiatives, and this no doubt reflected a wide variety of beliefs and practices.

Deities

We have seen that a number of deities are mentioned in Hegra's tomb inscriptions, but an even greater diversity appears in the texts and graffiti so far collected from the rock faces of the site. Unlike the tomb inscriptions, however, these are very rarely dated. They also come in a variety of languages and scripts, with Nabataean being the most numerous.[175] Sometimes it is possible to attach a deity to a particular monument or group of monuments, but on other occasions he or she is only mentioned in passing amid a group of graffiti. What emerges is a mixture of local and more distant elements, mirroring Hegra's role both as a stop on the trade route and a regional centre.

There are two occasions where it is reasonable to attach a large group of monuments or area to a particular deity. The first is what appears to be a small sanctuary on the Jebel al Maḥjar, to the north-east of the Ithlib, where a recently discovered Nabataean text reads *dnh gbl 'l'z' w mr byt'*—'This is the Jebel of al-'Uzza and the Lord of the House/Temple'.[176] It is inscribed nearby a double idol block, one with a geometric face and another plain. Nehmé draws attention to the other appearances of

concludes that these markings undoubtedly correspond to a monument that was never finished, probably niches with idol blocks (2005–2006 p. 211).

[173] Nehmé *et al.* 2006 p. 104.

[174] The role of triclinia and *mrzḥ'* in Nabataea as a whole is discussed below pp. 232–233.

[175] In her recent survey Nehmé counts 416 Nabataean texts, 48 Dadanitic, 111 in other scripts of Ancient North Arabian as well as a handful of texts in Imperial Aramaic, "Minaic", Hebrew, Greek and Latin (Nehmé 2005).

[176] Nehmé 2005–2006 p. 189.

this pair, in the Wadi Rumm and Petra, and points out some similarities and differences between the three monuments.[177] An unclear Dadanitic text carved above mentions Dushara, the first attestation of the deity in Dadanitic.[178] Attempts are often made elsewhere in Nabataea to identify Dushara with the 'Lord of the House/Temple', but the relationship between the two texts here is not entirely clear.[179] We can more certainly say that this is the first mention of al-'Uzza so far recovered from Hegra, and also the first sign that topographical features could be associated with particular deities in Nabataea. We have seen that *hn-ʿzy* was worshipped at Dadan, and she is attested in most other regions of Nabataea, so it is not surprising to find her cult here also. Her association with the *gbl*, however, is so far unique in Nabataea. That hills or mountains could have a particular religious significance is clear from all other parts of Nabataea, as well as many parts of the Near East, but nowhere is there such an explicit link with a deity. It has been suggested that the 'high-places' surrounding Petra's town centre may have been reserved for particular deities, or that the Jebel Harun should be understood as the mountain of Dushara.[180] Until more evidence comes to light, however, we should caution that, outside Hegra, we can say little more than that mountains in Nabataea had a religious significance that was common to many Near Eastern cultures.

The second area that we can attach to a particular deity also features *mr byt'*. He is mentioned in three texts inside a gorge towards the western edge of the Jebel Ithlib.[181] These were catalogued by Jaussen and Savignac, and Nehmé has recently revisited the site and made a number of corrections.[182] The texts all seem to refer to a sanctuary of *mr byt'*. The longest reads:

1. *l' dkyryn ʿbdʿbdt w ʿydw w 'wdyms w šryt ḥbryhm ʿlymy*
2. *mlkw w bʿqt 'srtgy' dy ḥdtw 'tr' dnh lmr' byt'*
3. *'m[r]. . .* *'mr mr' byt' l'*

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177 *Ibid*. pp. 191–192. See above p. 103, no. 18.

178 Macdonald in *Ibid*. p. 189.

179 *Ibid*. pp. 192–193. Nehmé proposes the attractive theory that *mr byt'* simply refers to the deity of the main temple in the various places where he appears, and that it could therefore be used to refer to more than one deity. We could also note that Dushara is regularly listed first when he is mentioned alongside other deities, whereas *mr byt'* appears second here after *'lʿz'*.

180 See above p. 73.

181 For the precise location of these texts, see Nehmé 2005–2006, fig. 137.

182 They are JSNab 57, 58 and 59. See now Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 194–202.

No! That they may be remembered 'Abd'obdat and 'Aydu and Eudemos and the rest of his companions, servants of Maliku and Ba'qat the *strategoi*, who have renovated this place for *mr' byt'*. Has said . . . *mr' byt'* has said no![183]

The translation of *'tr'* as 'place' seems secure, as does the interpretation of *ḥdt* as 'restore' or 'renovated'.[184] There was, therefore, some kind of construction dedicated to *mr byt'* here. The fact that it is specified as *'tr' dnh* (this *'tr'*) suggests that it was within sight of the inscription. Another of the texts records the construction of a *mnṣb* of *mr' byt'*. *mnṣb* is clearly related to the several Nabataean terms for idol blocks, and Nehmé interprets it as referring to the place where the block was set up.[185] The final text records an individual taking possession (*'ḥd*) of a place for *mr byt'*, and falls in line with the other texts from Hegra which record individuals reserving a place for cultic or funerary monuments.[186] This part of the Jebel Ithlib, then, seems to have been of particular importance to the cult of *mr byt'*, but there are no signs of any religious monuments. Nehmé draws attention to the fact that flood waters coming down the Jebel may have gradually swept away any construction here.[187]

Only on two other occasions can we be certain of the identity of a deity worshipped as an idol block in Hegra. A text carved just inside the entrance of the Siq, above an idol block, records the *msgd'* made 'for A'ra who is in Bosra, god of Rabbel' in the first year of Maliku the king.[188] The block resembles an altar, as do several examples from Petra, with a trapezoidal shape on the top and bottom. It is a good indication of the interconnectedness of the kingdom, perhaps as a result of the caravan trade,

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[183] Text and trans. Nehmé 2005–2006 p. 195.

[184] See Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 204–214 for *'tr'*. For *ḥdt* see *ibid.* p. 199. A Nabataean text from al-Jawf (Savignac and Starcky 1957) records the building and then the renovating (*ḥdt*) of a sanctuary, and another from Petra (*CIS* II 349) records the setting up and renovating (*ḥdt*) of a statue of Rabbel the king.

[185] Nehmé 2005–2006 p. 200. Note also *PAT* 1099 from Dura-Europos where the god Yarhibol is represented by a *mṣb*, although in this case the term refers to a figural and not aniconic representation. This was how the term was used in Palmyra (see Dirven 1999 p. 233).

[186] *Ibid.* p. 202.

[187] *Ibid.* p. 204.

[188] The text (JSNab 39) is laid out in full below p. 189. The dating of the text is a source of considerable interest. The mention of 'A'ra who is in Bosra, god of Rabbel' reminds us of several texts from the Hauran, certainly to be dated to the reign of Rabbel II, which call A'ra 'the god of Rabbel' (see below pp. 188–192). This King Maliku (III), then, may well have been recognised as a successor to Rabbel after the annexation, and it has been suggested that this may represent an attempt by this part of the kingdom to maintain its independence (see now Nehmé 2008 pp. 42–44).

that a local deity from the very northern end of Nabataea was also worshipped here at the very southern end.[189] The second example concerns Shay al-qawm. A text opposite the Diwan reads *šy'lqwm 'l[h']*—'Shay al-qawm the god', which Jaussen and Savignac had recorded in association with a niche with architectural features including a pediment containing the depiction of an eagle.[190] After recently revisiting the inscription, however, Nehmé has determined that it should not be connected with this niche, but rather another niche nearby, which is not mentioned by Jaussen and Savignac. The new niche is empty, but contains a socket for a portable idol block.[191] The only inscription associated with the first niche is a signature, and so any link between Shay al-qawm and the eagle can no longer be maintained.

No further rock-cut monuments from Hegra can be associated with a deity, but the graffiti that surround the site mention other gods and goddesses. As in the tomb inscriptions, Dushara and Manotu are associated here, appearing together in texts from the Jebel Ithlib and just outside the town.[192] Manotu appears once more, but this time probably alongside A'ra, although the name is not entirely clear.[193] If it is A'ra, then it seems that he and Dushara may also have been identified by some worshippers at Hegra, as in inscriptions from the Hauran.[194] Outside this, Dushara is also mentioned in several of graffiti, all similar to the common formula *šlm x qdm dwšr'*.[195] The situation here, then, is a fairly accurate reflection of the tomb inscriptions, where Dushara and Manotu are mentioned most frequently.

Conclusions

An overview of these three settlements in the northern Hijaz, then, has given us some glimpses into the religious attitudes of their inhabitants, and allowed us to trace some elements that seem common to the region. It is against this background that much of Hegra's religious life can be best

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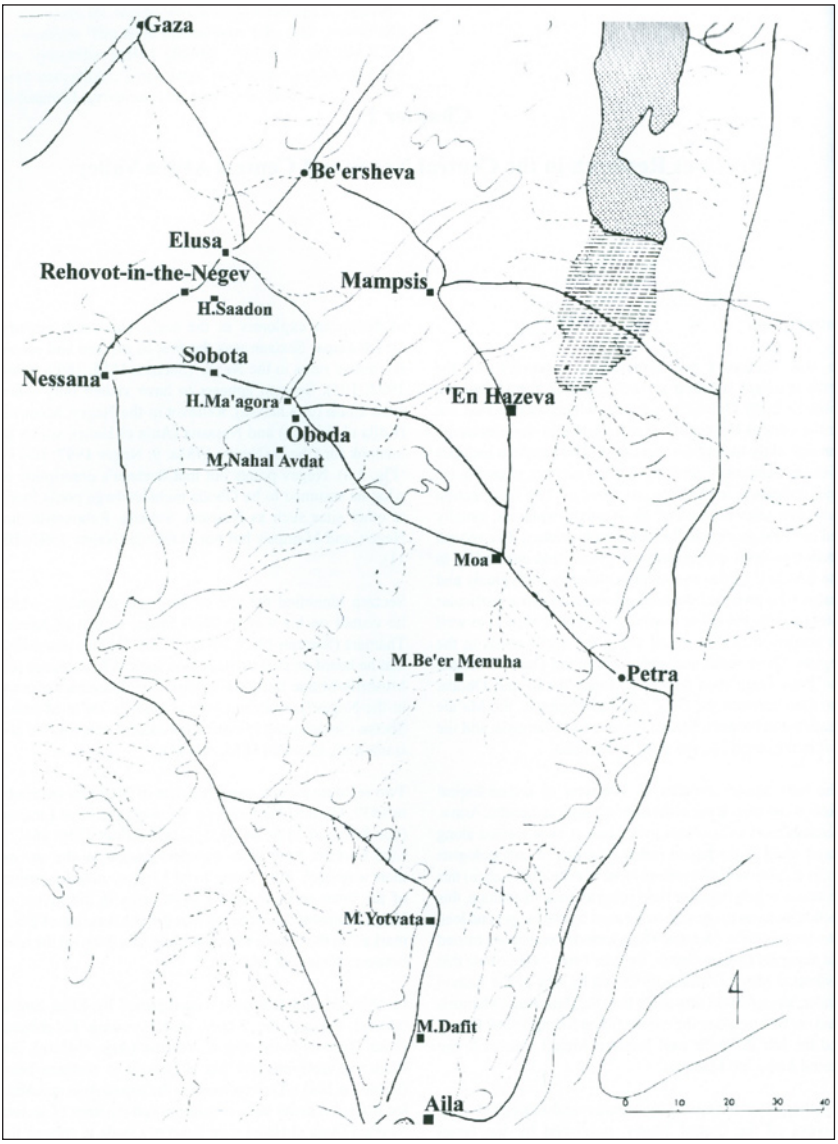
189 A similar example is JSNab 226, from near Dadan, which mentions Salkhad.
190 JSNab 72.
191 Nehmé 2005 p. 158.
192 JSNab 142/*RES* 1124 (although the reconstruction of Manotu is speculative) and JSNab 184.
193 JSNab 201.
194 See below pp. 188–192.
195 JSNab 52; 142; 169 and 184.

understood. The town is usually approached only with Petra's religious monuments in mind, and similarities and differences between the two sites are drawn out. There is of course much to be gained by comparison with Petra, as it provides the closest parallels to the monuments of the Jebel Ithlib. We can imagine the same rituals occurring at both sites, and at both the remains reveal the important position of the *mrzḥ'* in providing a structure for ritual practice. There is, however, another aspect to Hegra's religious life that a comparison with Petra cannot reveal. By taking into account the evidence from Dadan and Tayma, and similarly examining the epigraphic evidence from the whole range of languages and dialects in use in the region, we see that the movement of people between these centres led to the sharing of religious ideas. This is most notable in the deities attested at the three sites, where there is clear commonality.

The chronological difficulties with much of the evidence, particularly the Ancient North Arabian texts, provide us with little opportunity to accurately trace the development and exchange of these religious ideas. An example from Tayma shows us at least that artistic styles were transmitted from here to other parts of Nabataea. The famous idol block from the Temple of the Winged Lions in Petra showing the 'Goddess of Hayyan' clearly takes its inspiration from the funerary steles of Tayma.[196] These portray a schematised face in a very similar fashion, particularly with the curved eyebrows, and their Imperial Aramaic inscriptions suggest that they predate the Nabataean period.[197] If we are to look for influence in the other direction, coming from the more northerly parts of Nabataea to the Hijaz, then the clearest example must be Dushara. He does not appear in any texts that can be convincingly attached to the pre-Nabataean context, but is then pre-eminent on the tomb inscriptions of Hegra. It is in the introduction of his cult that the impact of Nabataean rule shows most plainly in the religious sphere. There was clearly a fluidity of religious ideas between these centres that, as in many parts of Nabataea, would have been helped by their role in the caravan trade. The religious life of Hegra in the Nabataean period was therefore a product of more local and more distant influences that combined to produce a religious landscape unlike anywhere else.

[196] See above pp. 53–55.
[197] See Patrich 1990 p. 85.



Map 4. Roads and settlements of the Nabataean Negev (Erickson-Gini 2006 fig. 12.4).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NABATAEAN NEGEV: ACROSS THE WADI ARABAH

The Negev, an area of rocky desert comprising most of southern Israel, occupied a crucial position in Nabataea (map 4). It was the final leg of the trade routes that crossed the kingdom before reaching Gaza and other Mediterranean ports, where goods could be made available to a much wider market. The numerous caravan halts that have so far been recorded there confirm the vigour of these routes,[1] and maintaining control of the region was therefore financially important to Nabataea's kings. Although settled habitation of the Negev in the Nabataean period seems to have been at a lower level than earlier times,[2] the cisterns, damns and other hydraulic installations of numerous settlements attest to a substantial agricultural population here under Nabataean control. The chronology of these, largely because of a relative dearth of epigraphic evidence, is very difficult to determine, and some of the current theories lack a solid grounding in the evidence. However, we can very broadly say that, during the first centuries BC and AD, a number of settlements that were subject to similar economic pressures existed here under Nabataean control and were in regular contact with the caravans moving towards the Mediterranean. A study of the religious life of the region confirms that, while aspects from elsewhere in Nabataea made their way here, the process also

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[1] Wenning 1987 remains the most comprehensive guide to Nabataean sites throughout the Negev (see particularly pp. 137–182); see also *Quellen* pp. 394–409. The most recent guide to archaeological developments in the area can be found in Erickson-Gini 2006 and 2010. The number of sites has led to some discussion of the exact itinerary of the trade routes during the Nabataean period. The Peutinger Table provides an indication of what was probably the chief route which moves through Elusa and Oboda (both occupied in the Nabataean period) before reaching Gaza (see, for example, the section of the map reproduced in Hirschfield 2006 p. 170 fig. 13.5 where both Oboda and Elusa are named). Cohen 1982a p. 246 considers many stations along this road to have been first built in the third and second centuries BC, although he notes that there has been much disagreement over so early a date (pp. 241–242).

[2] See, for example, Cohen 1982b p. 79 where, after remarking on the numerous Bronze and Iron Age sites discovered, it is stated: "The Roman and Nabatean periods are poorly represented, but hundreds of settlements and farms were recorded from the Byzantine period, when settlements in the Negev and in the country as a whole flourished."

occurred in reverse, with more local elements finding their way to other parts of Nabataea.

A brief historical overview of the region will help to better put the archaeological remains in their context. The first concrete evidence for Nabataean political control comes with perhaps the earliest inscription known from the kingdom, the original of which is now lost. Found at Elusa, it records the building of an *'tr'* (place) for the life of Aretas, the king of the Nabataeans.[3] The early date is suggested by peculiar letter-forms, but it is unfortunately unclear as to which Aretas is being referred to here. All four have been suggested as possibilities, leaving a range of dates from c. 168 BC–AD 40. More recently, a consensus seems to have formed around the first or second Aretas, suggesting that the Nabataeans were in control of this area during the second century BC.[4] We are on more solid ground for the first century BC. Josephus records how Alexander Jannaeus conquered and destroyed Gaza, which did not hold out long enough to receive the assistance offered by Aretas II.[5] Gaza had been an important administrative centre under Egyptian control since the Late Bronze Age, and Herodotus records it as such in the Persian period,[6] but it never seems to have come under direct Nabataean control. After its destruction, it is usually assumed that ports further to the south were used to access the Mediterranean, in particular Rhinocolura.[7] Gaza's predominant position was soon restored, however, when it was declared a free city by Pompey and rebuilt by A. Gabinius.[8] After a period under Jewish control, it was then returned to the province of Syria.[9] The literary sources can tell us something, then, of Gaza, and we can see that the Nabataean kings were concerned with developments in this crucial outlet for their goods. For the Negev proper, however, the sources are silent, and we must

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[3] See Cowley in Woolley and Lawrence 1915 pp. 145–146; *Quellen* pp. 394–395.

[4] See below p. 160 for a discussion of the text.

[5] *AJ* 3.360.

[6] Herodotus (3.5.2), who identifies it as Cadytis, the Egyptian form of the name, judges it to be about as large as Sardis. See Glucker 1987 pp. 1–3 for the very early history of the town.

[7] See, for example, *Quellen* p. 392. Strabo (16.4.24) records how goods are conveyed from Petra to Rhinocolura. Pottery from the Nabataean period has been found there, but there has not as yet been any excavation (Wenning 1987 p. 185).

[8] *AJ* 14.88. Gabinius is recorded to have restored a long list of settlements in the same area after Pompey had detached them from the Jewish kingdom (see Jones 1971 pp. 256–257).

[9] In 30 BC Augustus granted Herod control of the city (Josephus *AJ* 15.217), but it was returned to the province after his death in 4 BC. For all this see Glucker 1987 pp. 3–6.

rely on the epigraphic and archaeological data to reconstruct any kind of history during the Nabataean period.

In comparison to some other regions of the kingdom, the Negev has received a good deal of survey and excavation.[10] For the Nabataean period, Avraham Negev has conducted the most important excavations and published the most significant literature.[11] His dominance in the field has led to a number of detailed publications, but there has been criticism of his methodology and conclusions, particularly with regard to the chronology he advances.[12] The paucity of epigraphic and literary evidence makes any conclusions about the chronology of Nabataean settlements in the Negev imprecise, but the large amount of archaeological work has revealed numerous settlements which can, thanks to the finds of coins and pottery, be dated to the Nabataean period. Negev describes six of these as large settlements: Elusa, Nessana, Oboda, Rehovot, Sobota and Mampsis.[13] Wenning is far more cautious, considering that only Oboda

[10] The first systematic attempt to catalogue the Negev's remains was made by Musil in his volumes on Arabia Petraea (Musil 1907–1908). At the same time, a French team led by Frs Jaussen, Savignac and Vincent was conducting an exploration of Oboda which produced many detailed plans and maps (Jaussen *et al.* 1904, 1905a and 1905b). A more wide ranging survey was undertaken in the post-war period by Nelson Glueck, who published a series of reports of his explorations in the Negev (Glueck 1953–1959). More recently, Israeli archaeologists have continued the work of Glueck, with Rudolph Cohen conducting a series of surveys and excavations (Cohen 1979–1985).

[11] For a full bibliography of Negev's material see Wenning 1987 pp. 331–333. More recent literature includes final reports on the excavations at Mampsis (Negev 1988a and 1988b) and Oboda (Negev 1996) and encyclopaedia entries on the Negev sites in *NEAEHL* and *AEHL*.

[12] Negev's conclusions about the chronology and nature of the large settlements in the Negev should not be read without consulting the relevant parts of Wenning 1987. Particularly unique to Negev's approach is his division of Nabataean history into three periods—Early, Middle and Late—based on large scale trends of settlement and abandonment, which was developed in an article on the Nabataean kingdom as a whole (Negev 1977). This has not gained a wide following, and more recently Elliott 1996 has exposed problems in its formulation, and revealed how it has affected Negev's conclusions about the history of the Negev and the chronology of settlements there in the Nabataean period. Negev, largely as a result of his excavations at Oboda and the coins and ceramics collected there, claimed Nabataean sites in the Negev were abandoned before and after the 'Middle Nabataean Period' (c. 20 BC–AD 40). Elliott 1996 pp. 48–55 has shown firstly that this chronology does not fit the data from Oboda, and that Negev's extension of this scheme to the rest of the Negev and to Nabataea as a whole is even more problematic. I will therefore not use these categories here.

[13] See, most recently, Negev 2003a. Negev considers the first three of these to have been first developed in the early fourth century, although the inhabitants lived in tents and not permanent structures at that point. According to his chronology, the Negev was then abandoned, before all six settlements appeared during the first century BC (Negev 1977 p. 621).

can be described as a town.[14] Whatever the precise nature of these settlements, it is clear that there was a sedentary population in some of them during the Nabataean period.[15]

As for their religious practices, we are unfortunately less well-informed. After his surveys, Glueck ambitiously declared that "we doubt that there was a village of any size in the Nabataean Negev which did not have a temple of its own", and went on to identify six sites which must have contained sanctuaries.[16] He may still be proved right, but Wenning struck a more cautionary note: "nur für Oboda ist bislang ein nabat. Tempel nachgewiesen".[17] This is still the case, and Oboda provides us with the best evidence for religious practice in the Negev during the Nabataean period. Some inscriptions from other sites must be considered, and they may provide an indication of religious trends across the region, but it is Oboda that allows us to move closest to the variety and distinctiveness of beliefs in this region in the Nabataean period.

Oboda

The settlement of Oboda was built around a rocky 'acropolis' in the centre of the Negev, the summit of which is covered with ruins from the Byzantine period (fig. 43).[18] These have covered much of the earlier material, but the excavators have revealed cemeteries, houses and at least one temple dating from the Nabataean period.[19] A number of Nabataean graffiti on a hillock to the south-east of the acropolis led Jaussen, Savignac and Vincent to identify it as a 'high-place' of worship. Unfortunately, the

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[14] Wenning 1987 p. 139.

[15] See Erickson-Gini 2006 pp. 160–163. Permanent settlements of the Nabataean period have recently been discovered in Oboda and Mampsis.

[16] Glueck 1961 p. 16. The six sites are: Nitsanah (Nessana), Isbeita, Ruheibah, Khalasah, Kurnub (Mampsis) and 'Adba (Oboda). Glueck also claims there are a further six sites in the Wadi Arabah, to the south and east of the Negev, that must have held temples in the Nabataean period.

[17] Wenning 1987 p. 139.

[18] See most comprehensively Negev 1996. The site was first explored in detail by Jaussen, Savignac and Vincent (1904, 1905a and 1905b). Some brief investigations were carried out by the H. D. Colt expedition (W. Kendall in Colt (ed.) 1962 pp. 45–47), but the most important results can be found in Negev 1961a. A useful summary can be found in *AEHL* pp. 371–375. Most recently, the site has been investigated by Erickson-Gini (2002; 2006 p. 162).

[19] The presence of permanent dwellings in the Nabataean period has only been confirmed recently; see Erickson-Gini 2007 p. 51.

only dated example of these was engraved in the early third century AD, when the religious landscape of Oboda seems to have changed somewhat.[20] To the north-east of the acropolis was a large military camp (100m × 100m) that was for most of the twentieth century thought to be Nabataean, but has recently been dated to the third or fourth century AD.[21] For the Nabataean period, outside the temple so far identified on the acropolis, we are restricted to a handful of inscriptions from Oboda and its hinterland. These will allow us to track some details of Oboda's deities and the organisation of worship. Most of the evidence, however, comes from the Late Roman period, and this allows us perhaps to observe some changes in the religious landscape of Oboda.

The presence of a temple on the acropolis has been suggested since the discovery of several Nabataean inscriptions during the clearing of the site by Israeli archaeologists.[22] One of these, which was carved on a marble plaque and found on the northern slope of the acropolis, seems to take the form of a dedication and dates to the reign of Aretas IV, showing that there was probably some kind of religious building here in the early first century AD.[23] The first mention of a deity comes during the reign of Rabbel II (AD 70–106), on a libation altar found 2km to the south of Oboda:

1. *dnh m??' dy [...]ṭw bny [...*
2. *dḥ [...] bny mrzḥ' dnh mrzḥ*
3. *dwšr' 'lh g'y' bšnt 18* (?)
4. *lmr'n' rb'l mlk' mlk nbtw dy 'ḥyy wšyzb 'mh*

This is the ? that ... the sons of ... the members of this *mrzḥ'* the *mrzḥ'* of Dushara the god of Gaia in year 18 of our lord Rabbel, the king, king of the Nabataeans, who brought life and deliverance to his people.[24]

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[20] Jaussen *et al.* 1905b pp. 235–242. Inscription no. 2 (p. 238–241) is dated to the year 99 of the province, i.e. AD 204–205.

[21] Erickson-Gini 2002. It seems that Nabataean period deposits from earlier structures under the camp had led excavators to identify the structure as Nabataean (*ibid.* pp. 114–116).

[22] These are published in Negev 1961b and 1963, for a useful summary see Negev 1991b p. 63. Naveh 1967 made several corrections to Negev's initial readings.

[23] Negev 1961b no. 2. The verb *qrb* (offered) and a personal name survive from the first line, and *rḥm 'mh* (who loves his people), an epithet commonly ascribed to Aretas IV, from the second. It is unfortunately unclear what has been offered.

[24] Negev 1963 no. 10 pp. 113–117; *Quellen* p. 404. The reading follows that in *Quellen*.

1: The second word is unclear. Negev read *skr'* (dam), but Naveh was certain that the first letter was *m*, and the following two either *d* or *r*, giving possible readings of *mdr'*, *mrd'* or *mdd'* (Naveh 1967 p. 187). The meaning is not immediately clear, but may refer to something to do with the water system.
3: For "Dushara, the god of Gaia", see above p. 102, no. 16. Gaia was the name of a small settlement outside Petra, perhaps at the site of modern Wadi Musa.

Two other texts, also found outside the town, seems to take a similar form, again recording the construction of a *m*??', but in these cases no mention of a deity survives.[25] Negev suggested the identification of the god A'ra in another text, but in a second reading Naveh provided a preferable solution which does not include any divine name.[26]

So the only deity to be certainly identified from Nabataean Oboda and its surrounds is Dushara, and here he is not presented as a local deity, but linked with Petra. The inscriptions do, however, give an indication as to how the religious life of Oboda may have been structured. A number of the texts contain mentions of a *mrzḥ'*, which as we have seen from Petra is a private religious association that could be devoted to the worship of a particular god.[27] The text above was the only occasion where Negev identified the word, but in his re-readings of the texts Naveh saw several more mentions of the organisations. Two of these record the building of a *m*??', while the beginning of the third does not survive.[28] In one of these cases, we also hear of a *rb mrzḥ'* (chief of the *mrzḥ'*), a position which is attested once at Petra and many times at Palmyra.[29] We have seen that there is evidence from Petra of *mrzḥ'* being organised along professional lines. At Oboda, the *mrzḥ'* are shown as being responsible for the building of *m*??', which seem to be some kind of structure connected to the water supply. It is possible, therefore, that we have here an association of builders responsible for maintaining the water supply, and that they met in honour of Dushara. The presence of the *mrzḥ'*, like the mention of Dushara of Gaia, links the religious practices of Nabataean Oboda with Petra, as these associations are not attested anywhere else in the kingdom.

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[25] Naveh 1967 p. 188.
[26] For the god A'ra see below pp. 188–192. Negev 1961b no. 8b p. 137 read *'rt* in the second line of this text, and suggested it might be a scribal error for the divine name *"rh* (A'ra). Naveh 1967 p. 188, however, saw here rather the dating formula *byrḥ sywn* (in the month of Siwan).
[27] See above p. 78 for Petra; see also below pp. 232–233.
[28] Naveh 1967 p. 188.
[29] See above p. 104, no. 21.

We have some indication of the context of worship in Nabataean Oboda. Figures 44 and 45 show the eastern end of the acropolis and the ground plan of a structure there, identified as a temple ('Temple A'), which has been dated to the first centuries BC/AD. Negev also considers that 'Temple C' "was probably a temenos wall of the later Nabatean temple".[30] This later temple was first discovered by Woolley and Lawrence, and Negev seems to have found evidence for the development of the acropolis during the Nabataean period, but very few specific details have emerged.[31] The smaller building ('Temple A') was first uncovered by the Colt Expedition, who did not identify the structure as a temple.[32] Negev investigated the site further in 1989, and uncovered a building of tripartite plan, which he compared with other tripartite temples of Nabataea.[33] The building is particularly distinguished by the division of the innermost third into two unequal compartments. Negev considers that three niches in the southern wall, two in the large compartment and one in the smaller compartment, would have contained the images of the deities. He suggests a divine pair for the larger room, possibly Dushara and Allat, and Obodas for the smaller room.[34] The whole arrangement seems rather unusual, particularly the placing of the cult objects on the back wall of the adyton. Furthermore, we should note that there is no epigraphic evidence securely identifying this structure as a temple, and the unusual layout perhaps adds further doubt to this identification. It would be extremely unusual if such a prominent 'acropolis' did not hold a temple in the Nabataean period, but until the precise chronology of the different structures has been established more securely, it is difficult to be more specific as to its layout. In any case, suggestions as to the deities inhabiting the structure can at this stage only be speculative. The only contemporary deity so far attested, Dushara of

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[30] Negev 1991b p. 66.

[31] Woolley and Lawrence 1915 regret that they failed to visit the camp and the 'high-place' at Oboda but "to compensate in some measure for this lapse, I discovered under the ruins of the monastery the remains of a great Nabatean temple" (p. 95). Negev has followed this, claiming: "From the evidence of inscriptions and architectural remains, mostly in secondary use in buildings of later periods, it may be inferred that a temple was erected on the acropolis at the end of the 1st century BC." *AEHL* p. 372.

[32] W. Kendall in Colt (ed.) 1962 p. 45, pl. LXVIII. The excavators traced the 8.75 × 13 m structure but considered that it was divided into two parts. The report is most interesting for the details of the interior plasterwork that was recovered, which Kendall remarks "resembles very closely the plaster work found in a Nabataean building in the Wadi Rumm and now in the Jerusalem museum" (pp. 46–47).

[33] Namely, the Qasr el-Bint at Petra, the temple at Dhiban and the temple at Khirbet edh-Dharih (Negev 1991b p. 75).

[34] Negev 1991b p. 76.

Gaia, is explicitly identified as foreign to Oboda, and from what we know of the *mrzḥ'* in Petra they do not seem to have met or worshipped in the town's temples.

This is the only evidence that can be securely attributed to Nabataean Oboda, but the town has been raised in most discussions of religion in Nabataea for quite a different reason: the cult of Obodat the god.[35] We have already seen that this deity is attested as early as AD 20 in Petra, and appears again there in the context of a *mrzḥ'* of the god Obodat.[36] The deity has been known at Oboda since the beginning of the twentieth century, with Musil's discovery of a Greek inscription from the end of the third century AD mentioning Zeus Oboda, and a Nabataean graffito catalogued by the French team that declares "Obodat lives".[37] The suggestion was immediately made that we have here evidence for the deification of Nabataea's kings, and that this god was either the deified Obodas I or Obodas III.[38] The French excavators even identified his burial place in the town's necropolis, but this has now been shown to be of a much later date.[39] Indeed, the tomb of Obodas III, perhaps the most favoured candidate for deification, has also been identified as the Khazneh or the Corinthian Tomb in Petra, casting into some doubt his relationship with Oboda. The most explicit evidence for Obodas' deification comes from a fourth century source, Uranius, quoted in the sixth or seventh century by Stephanus Byzantius. Stephanus writes:

> Ὄβοδα: χωρίον Ναβαταίων. Οὐράνιος Ἀραβικῶν τετάρτῳ "ὅπου Ὀβόδης ὁ βασιλεύς, ὃν θεοποιοῦσι, τέθαπται."
>
> Oboda, a place of the Nabataeans. Uranius in his fourth book on the Arabs [states] "where Obodas the king, whom they deify, is buried."[40]

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[35] The most recent comprehensive discussion is by Healey 2001 pp. 147–151. For different opinions on the deification of Nabataean kings see Starcky 1966 col. 911 and Dijkstra 1995 pp. 319–321.

[36] See above p. 92, no. 5 and p. 103, no. 19.

[37] Musil 1908 p. 246, n. 15. Jaussen *et al.* 1905b p. 241.

[38] Starcky 1966 col. 906 considers that it must have been Obodas I who was deified. Negev, on the other hand, thinks that it must be Obodas II. After Alexander Jannaeus' conquest of Gaza it is possible that Obodas II led a Nabataean army to the Negev to re-establish Nabataean control. It is in this context that Negev thinks Obodas II could have become associated with Oboda (Negev 1991b p. 80). Most think Obodas II's reign too short for him to have achieved deification (62–59 BC), and consider Obodas III the more likely possibility (30–9 BC).

[39] Jaussen *et al.* 1905a pp. 82–89. A number of Greek texts and pottery discovered in more recent excavations have dated this tomb to the third century AD, although an earlier structure has not been ruled out (*NEAEHL* III p. 1161).

[40] See *Quellen* pp. 597–598.

Uranius is in no doubt, then, that a Nabataean king named Obodas was deified and buried at Oboda.

The cult of Obodat, however, is only attested at Oboda during the Roman period. Its first mention may come on a rock found some 4.5 km south of the settlement, which stipulates that the reader should be blessed before "Obodat the god" and goes on to mention a certain Garm'alahi (the author) who had set up a statue or image before Obodat the god.[41] There is no date recorded, but Negev states that it is "in any case no later than 150 CE, when Nabataean-Aramaic inscriptions were no longer written at Oboda".[42] This is not the case; we have already seen that there is a long Nabataean inscription, also drawn on rock, that dates from the 99th year of the province (AD 204/5), and recently a Nabataean text dating from the fourth century has been found in the Late Roman town.[43] The language of the inscription cannot help us to determine its date; indeed the fact that the cult of Obodat is mentioned points to the third or fourth centuries AD, when there are a number of Greek inscriptions naming the deity. The most informative of these reveal that his temple on the acropolis was rededicated in AD 267/8, and a tower on the plateau south of the acropolis was dedicated by the cult in AD 293/4.[44] Several other Greek inscriptions from the surrounds contain references to Zeus or Theos Oboda, pointing to an important local deity here in the Roman period, but for our purposes it must be emphasised that the first secure appearance of Obodas the god is not until AD 267/8, a century and a half after the end of the Nabataean period.[45]

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[41] Negev 1986; *Quellen* pp. 396–402. The text is also highly important from a linguistic point of view, as the last two lines are written in Arabic with the Nabataean alphabet (see Bellamy 1990; Kropp 1994). It should be noted that Negev's early dating for the stone has led many scholars to believe it to be the earliest example of Arabic surviving (the next being the Namarah inscription of AD 328 (see Bellamy 1985)), but as we shall see there can be little certainty over so early a date.

[42] Negev 1986 p. 60.

[43] *AEHL* p. 37, Negev 2003b p. 20 and Erickson-Gini 2010 p. 185. The text, written in black ink on a plaster wall, was found in one of the dwellings of the newly excavated fourth century town quarter. Coins from the late third, fourth and fifth centuries allow for a fairly confident dating of this quarter, and so of the Nabataean text. It mentions Dushara, attesting the continuation of his cult well into the Roman period and seems to take the form of a blessing.

[44] *GIN* 1b and 13.

[45] Naveh 1967 pp. 188–189 reconstructs four inscriptions which Negev presented separately (Negev 1961b nos 1, 2, 3 and 4) into one long text which has the opening line—"This is the statue of Obodat the god"—and dates it to the reign of Aretas IV. While he may be correct in attributing the four stones to a single text, the opening line is a purely hypothetical restoration taken from the first line of *CIS* II 354 (above. p. 92, no. 5). If we are to look for an earlier attestation of Obodat the god, then the AD 204/5 graffito (above

The evidence from Oboda, then, can add little to the discussion of the deification or cult of the Nabataean kings. Obodat the god was certainly present at Petra in the Nabataean period, but this does not prove he is the deified Obodas I, II or III. It is equally possible that the king's name was derived from the divine name, and similarly that the town's name was derived from some special connection with the Obodat the god of the Petra texts. Stephanus Byzantius was quoting a much later source, and it has been suggested that Uranius, writing in the third or fourth century AD, invented this as an aetiological explanation for the name of Oboda.[46] Also relevant here are a number of mentions of the god by other Christian authors. Both Tertullian and Eusebius describe Obodas, along with Dousares, as a god of the Arabs.[47] Their intention is to discredit the followers of these cults, claiming that they are worshipping mere mortals who have become gods. It is possible, then, that Uranius is here influenced by a wider Christian tradition that saw Obodas as originally a mortal, and so made a link with the Nabataean king of that name.

The strongest objection to Uranius' accuracy is the fact that no burial place suitable for the Nabataean king has been found at Oboda, and the most likely candidates for his tomb are at Petra. The deification of Obodas, then, could be authorial invention or, perhaps more likely, Uranius could here be reflecting a more widespread understanding of the town's name in the third and fourth centuries AD, even one held by Oboda's inhabitants themselves. This does not prove an historical connection to the Nabataean king, but can be understood as a fictitious heritage created to add individuality and historicity to the cult of Zeus Oboda in the Roman period. It seems most likely, as Healey suggests, that in the Nabataean period we have here a deity of primarily local significance, who also gained a following at Petra.[48] That said, like the cult of Dousares that appears in Bostra and its neighbourhood in the centuries after the Roman annexation, we should be wary of reading the later evidence for Obodat the god at Oboda back to the Nabataean period.[49] The only cult so far attested at Nabataean Oboda is that of Dushara, the god of Gaia.

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p. 153, n. 20) is the best candidate, although the authors prefer to see *'bdt* there as part of a personal name.

46 Wenning 1997 pp. 190–192.

47 Tertullian *Ad nationes* II. 8. Eusebius *De laud. Const*. XIII. 5.

48 Healey 2001 p. 151.

49 For Dousares in Bostra see below pp. 196–198.

If an Obodas was deified, it was a singular event, as there is no evidence for the deification of any of Nabataea's other kings. The process is not hard to imagine in the Hellenistic and Roman context, particularly if we consider the strong cultural connections between Petra and Ptolemaic Egypt, and Healey has shown that there are Semitic parallels.[50] However, it seems unusual that none of Nabataea's later rulers would have been elevated to such a status if the process was begun. Negev has suggested that the appearance of the name of Obodas and other kings in personal names throughout Nabataea should be treated as a theophoric element, and that this shows the divinisation of all Nabataea's kings. As Healey points out, however, these should be treated as basileophoric rather than theophoric.[51] Even if we do accept the evidence for a divine Obodas, then we run into the further difficulty that his cult in the Nabataean period (i.e. at Petra) is associated with a *mrzḥ'*, suggesting a more private form of worship. It could be that particular groups accepted the deification of the kings, but there is no sign that this was taken up in any kind of official capacity throughout the kingdom. All in all, the evidence for the deification of an Obodas is very problematic, and we should consider it unlikely unless more explicit evidence appears.

There is very little, then, that we can reconstruct about the religious life of Oboda in the Nabataean period. Extensive excavations have revealed little details of the context of worship, although it seems likely that there was a temple on the acropolis. The inscriptions allow us to only place Dushara of Gaia here, and show that at least one *mrzḥ'* was active in the settlement. Like Dushara, the *mrzḥ'*, which are only otherwise known from Petra, suggest a strong link between Oboda and the capital. This can be understood in light of Oboda's position on the busy caravan route between Petra and the Mediterranean. Unfortunately, however, there is very little that can be determined beyond this of the religious life of Nabataean Oboda.

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[50] Healey 1995.

[51] See Negev 1991b pp. 79–81. Healey 2001 p. 150 also points out the difficulty that the names of queens could also form part of personal names, and that Negev's thesis would then necessarily imply the divinisation of queens, of which there is no evidence.

Other Sites

Despite the paucity of its material, Oboda is the most informative site for our understanding of religion in the Nabataean Negev. If we are to attempt to build up a picture of religious practices across the region, however, there are some other places that must be considered

Elusa was first investigated by Jaussen, Savignac and Vincent at the beginning of the twentieth century, but they did not uncover any remains from the Nabataean period.[52] Pottery from the site dates from the third or second century BC, but the Israeli excavations have as yet been able to reconstruct little detail of the Nabataean settlement. Negev claimed that this consisted of a residential quarter and a theatre, the only known from the Nabataean kingdom outside Petra, in the eastern part of the site.[53] The theatre, however, has now been shown to most likely date from the Roman period.[54] The only epigraphic find from this early period is an apparently very archaic inscription mentioning Aretas, king of the Nabataeans.[55] The stone is now lost, but fortunately the photo from a squeeze survives (fig. 46). Cowley noted the peculiar style of the letters: "In fact they belong to an Aramaic alphabet which is only just beginning to develop the peculiarly Nabatean forms. None of the letters is typical Nabataean". The text reads:

1. *znh 'tr'*
2. *zy 'bd*
3. *ntyrw*
4. *'l ḥywhy*
5. *zy ḥrtt*
6. *mlk*
7. *nbṭw*

This is the place which *ntyrw* built for the life of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans.

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[52] Woolley and Lawrencce 1915 pp. 30–31, 108–110, 138–143. See more recently *NEAEHL* I pp. 379–383 and *AEHL* pp. 156–158.

[53] *NEAEHL* I p. 380. See also Wenning 1987 p. 142 for a different analysis of these finds.

[54] Goldfuss and Fabian 2000 re-examined the theatre during their excavations in 1997. Pottery found from different areas of the structure suggested to them that it went out of use during the sixth century AD, and was built at the end of the second or during the third century AD. They note, however, that "the dating requires additional examination" (p. 94).

[55] A. Cowley in Woolley and Lawrence 1915 pp. 145–147; *Quellen* pp. 394–395.

Cowley identified the Aretas as Aretas II (120–96 BC), but all four of the kings of that name have been suggested, leaving a range of dates from c. 168 BC–AD 40.[56] It is generally accepted, however, that Aretas IV can be discounted, as the script is so far away from the Nabataean of the first century AD, and his usual epithet "who loves his people" (*rḥm ʿmh*) is absent. We probably therefore have a text of the second or very early first century BC, and most likely one of the earliest inscriptions surviving from the Nabataean kingdom.[57]

For our purposes, however, it is the meaning of *'tr'* that is of greatest relevance. Cowley translated it as 'place', and this has been followed by most of the later commentators. The inscription as a whole suggests a religious dedication, as those containing the formula "for the life of king *x*" usually also include a divine recipient.[58] Healey draws attention to a dedication from Salkhad in the Hauran which mentions the dedication of an *'tr'* to Allat.[59] The word here most probably refers to some kind of religious structure, but we should not immediately transfer the meaning to Elusa. *'tr'* is a rather more general term in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, and can refer to a variety of structures or localities. Dijkstra's suggestion that the builder may have dedicated some kind of forum for merchants travelling to and from the Mediterranean is equally valid. Dijkstra also points out a further difficulty in that the reading of *'tr'* is very uncertain, although he cannot produce a more meaningful interpretation.[60] The word seems to carry a fairly broad and loosely defined range of meanings.[61] The inscription can therefore add very little specific information to our understanding of religious practice in Nabataean Elusa.

Outside the epigraphic evidence, there remains the possibility that the excavations have revealed the presence of a Nabataean sanctuary somewhere near the theatre. Negev considered that this formed part of a

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[56] See Dijkstra 1995 pp. 48–50 esp. n. 24 for a full bibliography; also Wenning 1987 p. 141.

[57] Healey 2001 p. 67; Wenning 1985 p. 454. See also Cantineau 1932 p. 44 who notes the use of the archaic demonstrative pronoun *znh* instead of the usual *dnh*. The script is certainly distinct from other examples of the Negev that can be dated to the first century AD and similarly from Nabataean inscriptions elsewhere.

[58] Dijkstra 1995 p. 49 notes this oddity, as well as some further peculiarities of the other vocabulary.

[59] Healey 2001 p. 67.

[60] Dijkstra 1995 p. 49, n. 26: the first and second ' are not alike, the *r* can be read as a *d* and the *t* "shows a number of divergent traces compared with the others in the inscription".

[61] See Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 204–214.

large complex with the theatre in the Nabataean period.[62] He compares the structure, of which no internal walls could be found, to the temenos of Khirbet Tannur. Unfortunately, little further detail has emerged about the structures to the west of the theatre, and Negev's thesis remains unproven. However, now that the theatre has been dated to the Roman period, it is prudent to date these buildings to the same period, and conclude that they can tell us little about the religious practice of Elusa during the Nabataean period.

Two other pieces of evidence ought also to be included here. In the passage of Epiphanius' *Panarion* quoted in the Introduction, where it is claimed that the cult of Dushara's virgin mother is worshipped at Petra, he goes on to state that the same rites occurred in Elusa.[63] Secondly, a passage from Jerome's *Life of Hilarion*, written at the end of the fourth century AD, describes the monk's visit to the town:

> Cum infinito agmine monachorum pervenit Elusam, eo forte die, quo anniversaria solemnitas omnem oppidi populum in templum Veneris congregaverat. (26–27)
>
> With a great company of monks he reached Elusa, as it happened on the day when the annual festival had brought all the people of the town together to the temple of Venus. (Trans. Freemantle)

As both these accounts seem to reveal the presence of the cult of an important female deity, then, Healey concludes that "we may speculate, therefore, that there had been an al-'Uzza temple in Nabataean times".[64] Both Epiphanius and Jerome, however, were writing in the fourth century AD, and it is therefore perilous to use them to inform us of the Nabataean period. There is no reason to object to Jerome's identification of a temple of Venus at Elusa, and indeed Epiphanius' link with Dushara may have arisen from knowledge of a cult of Venus there. However, we cannot on the strength of this alone place al-'Uzza, or any other female deity, in the Nabataean Negev.

Patrich has asserted that the discovery of several earrings, which he dates from the early first to the mid second century AD, in the necropolis

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[62] Negev 1976b p. 93; *NEAEHL* I p. 381: "The theater at Elusa, like similar ones at other Nabatean sites, was connected with a cult, either practiced at a temple, as at Sahr in the Ledja, or with funerary rites, as was probably the case in the large theater at Petra." Sahr, however, is well outside the borders of Nabataea, and any connection between the theatre at Petra and funerary rites is speculative.

[63] See above pp. 28–30.

[64] Healey 2001 pp. 67–68.

at Mampsis, to the north-east of Oboda, shows the presence of al-'Uzza in the region.[65] Two of these take the form of a disc inlaid with two semi-precious stones above a small convex circular projection. Patrich compares this pattern with 'eye-betyls' from Petra and elsewhere, concludes that the arrangement is intended to represent a nose and two eyes and asserts that this was recognisable as the "iconographic convention representing the goddess al-'Uzza".[66] Even if we accept that this is a nose and two eyes, which seems to me doubtful, we cannot certainly associate the motif as it appears on the 'eye-betyls' with al-'Uzza.[67] In any case, the designs on the earrings, even if they are intended to represent a goddess, can tell us little about the cultic realities of worship in Mampsis.

We can add one other inscription to our survey of Nabataean evidence from the Negev. A fragmentary text from Sobota contains a reference to Dushara.[68] Only two words can be reconstructed—*dwšr' bṭb*—which is a common formula in Nabataean texts.[69] The stone was reused in the building of a Byzantine church, and the archaeological information from Sobota gives us little help in reconstructing the context. Only pottery has so far been dated to the Nabataean period and no architectural remains. As we have seen, then, that Nabataean inscriptions persisted well into the Roman period at Oboda, we can unfortunately not attribute this securely to the Nabataean period.

A number of other settlements in the Negev have produced coins and pottery from the Nabataean period. Unfortunately, definitely Nabataean architectural and epigraphic evidence from these sites is generally elusive. Outside Oboda, Mampsis is the only other centre where permanent settlement has so far been confirmed for the Nabataean period.[70] Nessana should also be mentioned here.[71] The site is best known for its Byzantine papyri, but a number of Nabataean texts suggest that there was settlement

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[65] Patrich 1984.

[66] *Ibid*. p. 44.

[67] The 'eye-betyls' that we can identify are not always to be associated with al-'Uzza. The clearest example of this is the idol in the Wadi Siyyagh at Petra, which is identified as Atargatis (*CIS* II 423; Lindner and Zangenberg 1993; above p. 105, no. 23). There is also a still unpublished example mentioned by Merklein and Wenning 1998b p. 84, n. 30, of an eye idol identified as Dushara.

[68] Jaussen *et al.* 1905b p. 257, pl. X.

[69] The formula *dkyr bṭb* with a personal name is particularly common, and sometimes a deity is also named in the formula 'remembered be . . . before . . . for good' (Healey 1996; Healey 2001 pp. 175–178). It seems most likely that this is the formula used here.

[70] *AEHL* pp. 310–312.

[71] *AEHL* pp. 367–368.

here in earlier times.[72] Outside these large centres, numerous smaller sites have yielded pottery and coins from the Nabataean period, suggesting a network of stops along the caravan routes passing through the Negev. Architectural evidence survives at some of these, and a few have even been tentatively identified as holding Nabataean temples, although details of these have not yet emerged.[73] There is hope, then, that we will soon be better informed about the context of worship in the region. For the moment, however, we are mostly restricted to evidence from the Late Roman period, and all too often this is used to make assumptions about the Nabataean Negev.

Conclusions

It is in the Roman period that Oboda seems to have developed into a major cult centre. We cannot track in detail the origins and development of Zeus Oboda, or the Obodat the god of the Nabataean inscriptions of the Roman town, but we do know that our evidence for his cult only appears at least a century after the Roman province was established, and therefore in a very different social and political context. In a world of shifting religious traditions and identities, any connection with the Nabataean period is problematic. That said, the archaeology indicates that Oboda probably did hold a Nabataean temple. In light of the cult of Obodat at Petra, then, it also seems likely that the god was worshipped at Oboda in the Nabataean period, and that there was some kind of meaningful connection between the name of the town and the deity. Any further connection with the king must remain speculative. As to the nature of this cult, the only details we can advance are that it may have been organised along the lines of the *mrzḥ'*. We find these both in the cult of Obodat the god in Petra, and the only cult attested from Nabataean Oboda, that of Dushara the god of Gaia. Both also reveal a connection with Petra, and both reveal something about the mobility of local deities and religious practices over the

[72] See F. Rosenthal in Colt (ed.) 1962 pp. 198–210. Ten Nabataean inscriptions were recorded during the excavations at Nessana, four written on small rocks and six on ostraca. They mostly consist of lists of names, and have been dated from AD 150–350 on palaeographic grounds.

[73] Erickson-Gini 2006 p. 162: "Two structures that probably served as temples were constructed in the middle of the first century AD at Horvat Hazaza, located along the Mampsis-Oboda road, and in Nahal Boqer overlooking the main Petra-Gaza road." Two further possible temples have also been identified at Moa and Yotvata.

kingdom. The presence of the god of Gaia shows how religious ideas could spread outwards from the centre, and the Obodat the god of the Petra texts shows how the reverse could happen, with deities moving from the periphery inwards. Such mobility, no doubt enhanced by the trade routes, led to gods being received and worshipped in a variety of social and physical contexts, where a diversity of meanings and significances would have been attached to them.

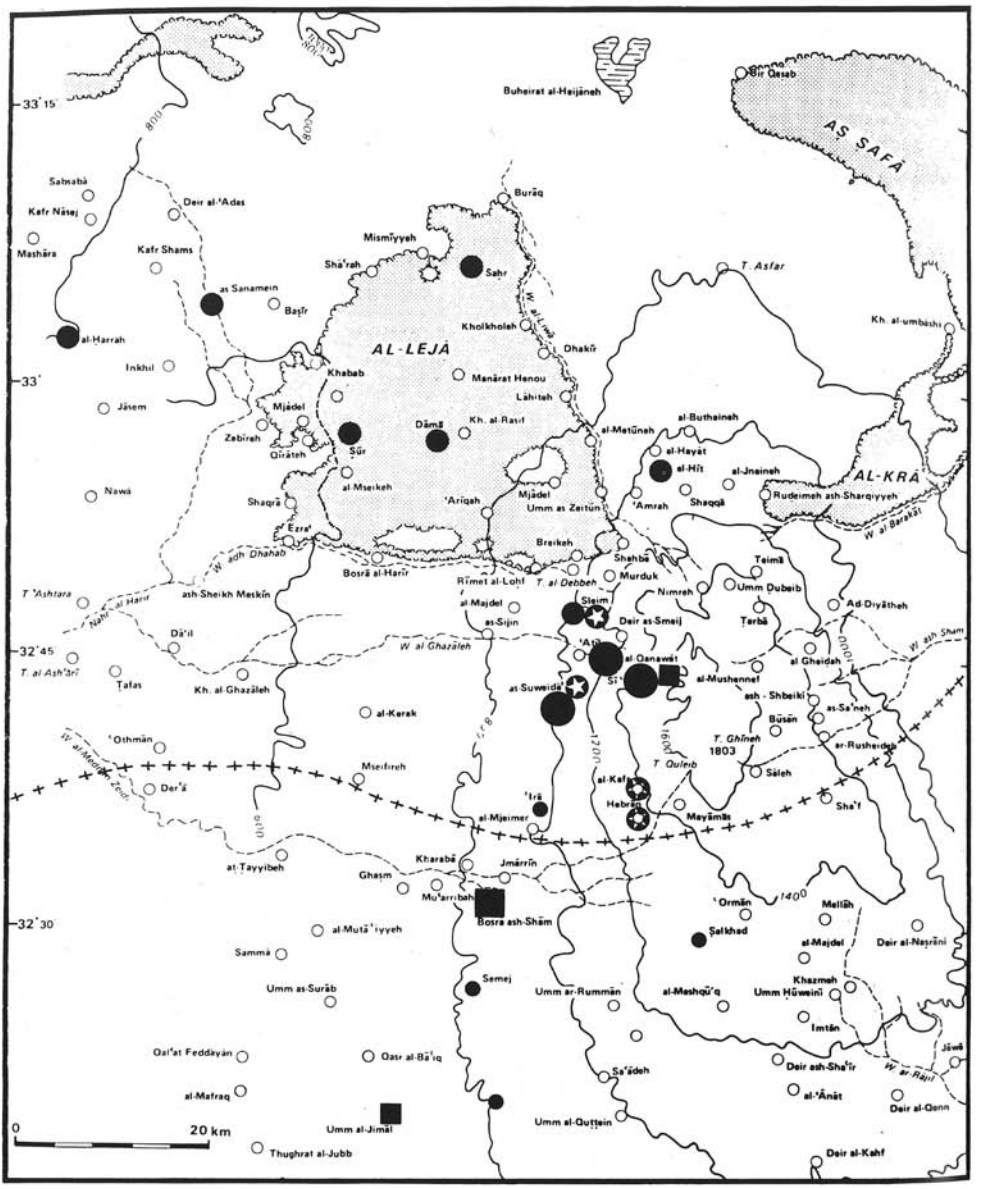

Fig. 1 : Période préprovinciale (du IIe s. av. n. è. à la fin du Ier s. de n. è.)

● Décor préprovincial régional
✪ Décor syrien provincial
■ Décor nabatéen
+ + + + + Tracé probable de la frontière entre Royaume nabatéen et protectorat hérodien

Map 5. Different architectural styles of the Hauran (Dentzer-Feydy 1988 fig. 1).

CHAPTER FIVE

NABATAEANS IN THE HAURAN: POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES

Part of the volcanic landscape of southern Syria has been known as the Hauran since antiquity. The area is naturally divided into various geographic sub-regions by the different volcanic flows that have passed over it. Neighbouring Gaulanitis and Trachonitis form other sub-regions, and it has been suggested that the characteristic '–itis' names date back to a time when the whole area was under Ptolemaic control.[1] The Hauran only begins to feature significantly in the literary sources at the beginning of the first century BC, when there seems to have been no dominant authority in the region. The Seleucid Empire was weakening rapidly, and the Hasmonaeans to the west and Nabataeans to the south competed for control of the region (map 5). After the Romans established the province of Syria just to the north, they also lost little time in becoming involved further to the south. The picture becomes a little clearer in the first century AD, and we can more firmly establish who exactly was in control of where. By now, the Nabataeans controlled the southern part of the Hauran, up to Bosra. Their territory was bordered to the south-west by the cities of the Decapolis, and to the north by the Jewish Tetrarchy of Philip, son of Herod, and later the two Agrippas. To the east, settled territory ended at the Jebel al-Arab, and, beyond this, tens of thousands of Safaitic inscriptions scattered across the desert attest to a substantial nomadic population.

The Hauran occupies a unique position in Nabataean studies, which is reflected in the amount of literature published on the region.[2] It is the

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[1] Dentzer-Feydy 1988 pp. 219–220.

[2] There has been much archaeological work and scholarship focussed on the Hauran in the last twenty years, before which little had been added to our knowledge since the beginning of the twentieth century. On the archaeological side, the most significant contribution has been from the Dentzers and other French archaeologists, who have led detailed excavations at Sia as well as surveying the whole of the Hauran (see Dentzer 1985, Dentzer-Feydy *et al.* 2003, Clauss-Balty 2008, Dentzer and Weber 2009 and Dentzer-Feydy and Vallerin 2010). For overviews of the area's Aramaic inscriptions, see Starcky 1985 and Nehmé 2010. There have also been several smaller scale studies focussing on individual sites, e.g. Bosra (Dentzer *et al.* 2002b; Dentzer-Feydy *et al.* 2007), Umm el-Jimal

only part of Nabataea which appears regularly in the ancient sources, and the Nabataean settlements cluster together here a considerable distance from the next Nabataean town to the south.[3] The Nabataean evidence here can therefore be treated together. We shall also see that certain common cultural influences are visible in the material culture of the whole region. These are not limited by political boundaries, and they reach across the border between Nabataean territory and the Jewish tetrarchy to the north. Common architectural, sculptural and religious influences seem to have bound the Hauran together, and this is shown most visibly in the black volcanic basalt that was the construction material of choice throughout the region. When discussing the religion of the Nabataean area, then, we should not completely dismiss material from further north that may be able to shed light on the Hauran as a whole. However, the Nabataean territory must be the focus, and it is firstly important to establish, from the archaeological and literary evidence, which settlements were under Nabataean control and when. Then, we shall move on to describing and analysing the Nabataean evidence from each individual settlement before drawing the material together to consider how religious practices in this part of Nabataea might be characterised.

Borders

Alongside its topographic divisions, the study of the Hauran has also been shaped by the borders modern archaeologists have imposed on the region. Howard Crosby Butler, sponsored by Princeton University, led the first extensive archaeological expedition to the region at the beginning of the twentieth century. His team visited the Hauran three times, in 1899–1900, 1904 and 1909, and produced detailed recordings of the surviving remains as well as catalogues of the Greek, Latin and Semitic inscriptions that

(de Vries 1998, 2009), Sleim (Freyberger 1991), Sahr (Kalos 2003) and Qanawat (Henrich 2003 and Oenbrink 2003). For recent surveys of the Nabataean presence in the area see Peters 1977, Wenning 1987 pp. 29–51, Patrich 1990 pp. 40–48, Healey 2001 pp. 62–67 and *Quellen* pp. 165–200.

[3] It is not until we reach the eastern side of the Dead Sea that we begin to encounter Nabataean settlements again, c. 100 km away from Bosra. Madaba is the first large Nabataean settlement we meet, where an inscription dated by the reign of Aretas IV suggests it was under Nabataean control (*Quellen* pp. 210–212). Beyond this, there was regular settlement on the fertile plains east of the Dead Sea until we reach the certainly Nabataean sites of Khirbet Tannur and Khirbet Dharih on the Wadi Hesa.

they were able to find.[4] This comprehensive work remains the starting point for any study of the Hauran, and for some sites Butler still provides the only report. Furthermore, in the century since the expedition, the condition of those monuments still standing has deteriorated considerably, mostly as a result of stone robbery. Butler's photos, and occasionally those of his predecessors, therefore sometimes provide a picture of the monuments that is now unrecoverable.[5] However, there are some problems in using the publications today. Firstly, at some sites where there have been more recent excavations, the plans drawn by Butler have been shown to be inaccurate.[6] There seems to have been a desire to reconstruct temples as having a central cult podium, which was seen as particularly 'Nabataean'. Secondly, there was a tendency to classify all the remains that were thought to be pre-Roman as 'Nabataean', and similarly the large majority of Semitic inscriptions from the area were also catalogued as 'Nabataean'.[7] This view of the pre-Roman Hauran as mostly Nabataean

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[4] See *PPUAES* and Littmann 1914 for the Princeton expeditions to the region. Sartre 1985 pp. 11–29 has a comprehensive overview of the earlier archaeological exploration of the Hauran. This began in 1805 with the visit of the German Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, who was later assassinated in Yemen in 1811 (see now Seetzen 2002). Travelling to the area was prohibitively dangerous in the early nineteenth century, and other explorers also met a similar end through violence or illness. From the middle of the century, however, archaeological and epigraphic investigation began in earnest. Waddington 1870 provided the fullest collection of the region's Greek and Latin inscriptions, and de Vogüé 1865–1877 of the architectural remains and Semitic inscriptions. Although the region was visited by numerous scholars, missionaries, geographers and diplomats from the 1870s to the First World War, Butler's are the next most significant publications for our purposes.

[5] The best example of this is the tomb of Hamrath at Suweidah, which de Vogüé visited and drew (de Vogüé 1865–1877 pp. 29–31 and pl. 1). It is almost the only example of the Doric order in the Hauran and has been dated to around the turn of the era (Dentzer-Feydy 1985 pp. 263–265). When Butler visited the site some forty years later, however, the tomb had been almost completely destroyed by quarrying for a nearby garrison (Butler 1903 pp. 324–326).

[6] Two good examples of this are the temple at Sahr and the temples at Sia. Kalos has recently noted reservations about Butler's reconstruction of the temple at Sahr, stating that the roof of the cella was covered over and that the four columns that Butler postulated for the middle of the room never existed (Kalos 2003 p. 159). Butler reconstructed a similar arrangement in the cellae of the temple of Baalshamin and the "Temple of Dushara" at Sia, but in his more recent work on the site Dentzer has not been able to confirm these (Denzter 1985 p. 71). The problem has been exacerbated by Butler's habit of including hypothetical reconstructions in parts of his plans. Unfortunately, later researchers have not always indicated that these parts are hypothetical, and included the whole plan as if Butler had seen it on the ground (e.g. Netzer 2003 p. 66).

[7] See, for example, Littmann 1914 pp. xiv–xv. Although he draws attention to some of the peculiar letter forms from the Hauran, these are explained as particularly early or old forms, or as the result of the influence of a written cursive script, and are still classified as 'Nabataean'.

persisted throughout much of the twentieth century and still shapes very recent studies.[8]

Twenty or thirty years ago, however, the evidence for a Nabataean presence in the Hauran began to be examined more closely. Starcky had already cautioned as to the extent of the kingdom in this area,[9] but it was not until the Dentzers and others began to investigate the material in detail that the real extent of the Nabataean occupation became more visible.[10] While the Nabataean presence was shrinking, more emphasis was being placed on the local or 'indigenous' nature of the sculpture and architecture that demonstrates certain commonalities and seems distinct from the surrounding regions. For the "pre-provincial period" (i.e. before AD 106), Denzter-Feydy has attempted to isolate three separate cultural layers (shown on map 5).[11] In the southern part of the Hauran, she sees a Nabataean influence in the architecture, which has many parallels with Petra. This is particularly prominent at Bosra, where the monumental building programme of the first century AD includes capitals and columns that are seen as particularly Nabataean. On the other hand, further north, in the area under Jewish control, there is more indication of the Graeco-Roman architectural and sculptural influences that are more common in Provincia Syria to the north. Denzter-Feydy singles out Sleim and Suweidah as good examples of this, citing their normal Corinthian capitals and acanthus scrolls.[12] Like the 'Nabataean' influences, these are seen as somehow external to the 'indigenous' influences that form Dentzer-Feydy's third cultural layer. Examples of this are found all over the Hauran, including in the area of Nabataean control. These monuments demonstrate characteristics distinct from Classical models, with particularly distinctive architraves and columns decorated with vine scrolls. Dentzer-Feydy attaches

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[8] The northern Hauran is still often included in recent surveys of Nabataean culture. See, for example, Netzer 2003 pp. 66–115 and *Quellen* pp. 165–181.

[9] Starcky 1966 col. 917. It had already been realised that some of the monuments were not built under Nabataean control, but there was still a desire to see them in a Nabataean context. Butler, for example, acknowledges that Sia was not under Nabataean control in the first century AD, but still sees the sanctuary as Nabataean: "It is certain that Nabataeans lived and worshipped here during all this time, and that they erected buildings and presented gifts to their gods; although this most sacred of their holy places was under the sway of a rival kingdom" (*PPUAES* II A p. 372).

[10] Starcky 1985 p. 173; Dentzer-Feydy 1988 p. 221.

[11] Dentzer-Feydy 1988 pp. 222–223.

[12] *Ibid.* p. 223: ". . . qui révèlent l'influence encore limitée de l'art decoratif gréco-romain de la Province de Syrie voisine: rinceaux d'acanthe à grosses tiges cannelées, premiers chapiteaux corinthiens normaux, profils et motif sculptés (perles et pirouettes, oves) également normaux."

these to a wider cultural sphere of "Syrie intérieure indigène", and draws in parallels from a much wider area.[13] She concludes that this layer is the most ancient, and the other two are more recent cultural importations.

It is worth examining these classifications more closely, as the cultural boundaries defined by Dentzer-Feydy may well have implications for how we are to understand religion in the region. She sees significant Nabataean influences at Bosra and Umm el-Jimal, about 30km to the south, with the only other example being the third temple in Sia.[14] It has now been demonstrated, however, that none of the remains from Umm el-Jimal can be firmly dated to the Nabataean period.[15] We should also be wary of describing the third temple in Sia as Nabataean, although it does seem somewhat distinct from the other sanctuaries of the site.[16] No inscription gives an insight into who built the temple, but there are some affinities with the style of Bosra's architecture, and it could be that whoever funded Bosra's monumental building programme decided also to place his mark on Sia. In any case, the 'Nabataean' style does not seem to be particularly closely connected to the political situation.

It is the style identified as that of "Syrie intérieure indigène" which dominates the Hauran and stretches well into Nabataean territory. Indeed, we can find another example well beyond map 5 much further to the south, in the sanctuaries of Khirbet Tannur and Khirbet Dharih near the Wadi Hesa.[17] Dentzer-Feydy describes this layer as older than the two 'foreign' imports, but the chronological data for the pre-provincial period is very weak and does not support any such firm conclusions.[18] The evidence

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[13] *Ibid*. pp. 222–223. Parallels are drawn in from far afield both chronologically and geographically. Starting from Palmyra, Dentzer-Feydy moves further eastwards to Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, Assur, Babylon and Uruk-Warka. Denzter develops the theme, showing many stylistic parallels between the sculpture of the Hauran and other areas of the Hellenistic and Ancient Near East (Dentzer 2003). See also Wenning 2001b for the figurative sculpture of the Hauran.

[14] Dentzer-Feydy 1988 p. 223. The temple being referred to here is that in the southern corner of the easternmost courtyard of the site (fig. 48).

[15] A large excavation project is currently underway at Umm el-Jimal, with results and news published on www.ummeljimal.org. See most importantly de Vries 1998 and 2009. For Nabataean funerary texts from the site, see Graf and Said 2006.

[16] See below p. 183.

[17] See below ch. 6.

[18] There is very little evidence for dating the more Graeco-Roman layer that is restricted to Herodian territory. The best piece comes from Hebran, where an inscription mentions that a gateway (*tr'*) was built in AD 47 (*Quellen* pp. 179–180). However, so little is known of the archaeological context (*PPUAES* II A p. 325; Wenning 1987 p. 39), that we cannot date the rest of the building. Of the other sites that Dentzer-Feydy puts in this category, Sleim is the best known. There are no dated inscriptions connected to this temple, and

starts to appear in the first century BC, and none of the categories seem to precede the others. It is only the style identified as Nabataean, which we have seen is largely limited to Bosra, that can be dated with some confidence to the second half of the first century AD. This is the only of Dentzer-Feydy's categories that can be regarded as somehow 'foreign', in that it is largely restricted to one location and displays a coherent style that seems to have originated in the Nabataean heartlands near Petra.[19] The other two categories, even though they display differences, should both be regarded as equally 'indigenous' to the Hauran, in that they do not seem to have been directly inspired by one outside model. Dentzer accepts that the architecture of "Syrie intérieure indigène" drew on models from a much wider background, and we should see the use of Graeco-Roman models in the same light. Those in the Hauran no doubt drew inspiration from the architecture of all the surrounding regions when building their monuments. In doing so, they produced a distinctive style that displays common artistic influences, and it is possible that this is only the most visible sign of a wider cultural unity across the region, including that of the religious sphere.

For our purposes, however, we must first make a clear distinction of what to include in this study of the religious life of Nabataea. There has been much literature devoted to analysing the Nabataean presence in the region.[20] Glueck, noting the absence of 'Nabataean' pottery finds north of Madaba, suggested that we should see only a very limited Nabataean presence in the region as a ruling class over the local population.[21] However, more recent finds, particularly at Bosra, show that this type of pottery was also used in the southern Hauran.[22] It is now therefore thought that there was a more widespread Nabataean population in this area.[23] However, there are dangers in attaching this type of pottery to a particular ethnic

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Freyberger's attempt to date it is only from the decoration and has not been universally accepted (Freyberger 1991 p. 11).

[19] The most characteristic feature of this decoration is the horned capitals that have been found in Bostra and the third temple at Sia. There are parallels for these 'Nabataean capitals' from further south in the kingdom, particularly at Petra. While similar designs were produced outside the kingdom, it seems that there were two particular forms distinctive to Nabataea (see McKenzie 2001 pp. 97–99).

[20] See above p. 167, n. 2.

[21] Glueck 1965 pp. 6–7: "They functioned there, it seems, more as colonial overlords than as permanent settlers in completely homogenous communities, and apparently did not form the decisive majority of the population."

[22] Dentzer 1986; Dentzer *et al.* 2002b p. 86.

[23] See, for example, Sartre in Dentzer-Feydy *et al.* 2007 p. 9.

group, and in claiming that it signifies the presence of a 'Nabataean' population somehow distinct from those living there before.[24] The distribution of pottery could have been determined by any number of factors, for example trade relations, beyond the personal affiliations of the user, and as Glueck's theory was shown to be inaccurate by later finds, further finds may alter the current picture. The archaeological evidence does not allow us to distinguish 'the Nabataeans' from any other group, if indeed such a distinction is legitimate for the Hauran in this period. Political control is the only feasible yardstick by which we can decide what to include, and we should move away from trying to discern ethnic groups and their religious preferences. This chapter will therefore focus on the evidence from the Nabataean controlled part of the Hauran. Firstly, then, we must decide what to include, and the best way of going about this is a review of the historical and epigraphic sources. It is the inscriptions, and particularly how they are dated, that can give the most immediate indication of political control, and the surviving literature can help to place this in the overall history of the region. We shall include here, then, a brief historical overview of the region, as it is particularly relevant in this case as to how we should approach the religious material.

Historical Overview

The Hauran is the only part of Nabataea where the literary sources can allow us to reconstruct anything approaching a detailed political chronology.[25] This is mostly thanks to Josephus, who recorded the frequent fighting between the Herodians and their Jewish predecessors, and the Nabataeans. The first mention of the Nabataeans in the region, however, comes from the much quoted Zenon papyri, written in the middle of the third century BC, which records the movement of Nabataeans "εἰς Αὔρανα". However, this is not enough to show that the Nabataeans had any kind of political control over any of the Hauran.[26] Similarly, there are

[24] See, for example, Schmid 2007b p. 323 where he notes that Nabataean pottery has been found along trade routes far outside the kingdom, although these sites are around the Arabian peninsula and not to the north of Nabataea.

[25] The best overview of the political history of the Hauran in the wider context is still that of Bowersock 1983. For more recent overviews see Wenning 2007b pp. 36–38 and Engels 2007.

[26] See Graf 1990 pp. 69–75 for a translation and commentary of the relevant part of the Zenon archive. The report is dated to 259 BC and records the activities of two men, Drimylus and Dionysius, who sold slave girls. When one of them entered the Hauran, he encountered

several mentions in the Books of the Maccabees of Nabataeans and 'Arabs' in the area during the second century BC.[27] Again, however, it is difficult to determine whether we should see this as evidence for Nabataean political control in the area, and Bowersock has rightly warned against automatically seeing a reference to the Nabataeans in any mention of 'Arabs'.[28] It is not until we can join the chronology of Josephus at the beginning of the first century BC that we begin to encounter in earnest the Nabataeans in the Hauran. In describing the activities of Alexander Jannaeus across the Jordan, Josephus describes how he fell into an ambush at the hands of Obodas, "the king of the Arabians", at the city of Gadara.[29] Soon after, because Alexander was having problems with rebellious factions within Judaea, he had to cede his conquests across the Jordan to Obodas.[30] It was not only the Jewish dynast that was interested in controlling the Hauran, however, and the Seleucid king Antiochus XII, perhaps concerned at the newfound threat of the Nabataeans, launched an expedition against them. He was beaten and killed by the new Nabataean king, Aretas III, nearby the village of Canatha.[31] Seleucid authority in the southern part of Syria was now rapidly disintegrating, and this allowed the Nabataeans to briefly extend their kingdom to its most northerly extent. The people of Damascus, now threatened by the neighbouring Ituraeans, invited Aretas to take control of the city.[32] The city's coins allow us to date this firmly at 84 BC, when the first coins bearing his name in Greek appear, and they extend until 72 BC.[33]

It seems likely that the Nabataeans lost control of Damascus in 72, when the coins of Aretas end. There has been much debate about a remark in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, when he describes his escape from the "ethnarch of Aretas" in Damascus.[34] The episode must have occurred

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the Nabataeans and was arrested for seven days. The passage shows that there were Nabataeans in the area, but does not prove that it was under the control of the king.

[27] E.g. 1 Macc. 5.25 and 1 Macc. 9.35. See also Peters 1977 p. 264.

[28] Bowersock 1983 pp. 19–20.

[29] Josephus *AJ* 13.375.

[30] Josephus *AJ* 13.382.

[31] Josephus *AJ* 13.387–391. Antiochus' expedition seems to have been intended against Alexander Jannaeus as well as the Nabataeans. Josephus reports that Antiochus was on the brink of victory when he was slain. His army then fled to the village of Cana where most of them died of famine.

[32] Josephus *AJ* 13.392.

[33] See Meshorer 1975.

[34] 2 Corinthians 11.32–33: ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὁ ἐθνάρχης Ἀρέτα τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφρούρει τὴν πόλιν Δαμασκηνῶν πιάσαι με, καὶ διὰ θυρίδος ἐν σαργάνῃ ἐχαλάσθην διὰ τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἐξέφυγον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ.

shortly before the end of Aretas IV's reign in AD 40. In the absence of any other evidence for Nabataean control of the city, the ethnarch has usually been interpreted as the official in control of a Nabataean community in Damascus, and not the city as a whole.[35] Furthermore, Damascus was minting Imperial coins as late as the AD 30s, and it seems unlikely that the Romans would be willing to cede control of such an important centre to the Nabataean king. Bowersock, however, argues persuasively that Aretas could have taken control of the city briefly at this point.[36] In any case, it would not have been for more than a year or two, and as there is no archaeological evidence from the first period of Nabataean control and its coins tell us nothing about religion, we can exclude Damascus from this survey.

The Nabataeans retreated from Damascus in 72 BC in the face of Tigranes' invasion of Syria from Armenia, and we do not hear of them until 65 BC. This was again in the context of internal strife in the Jewish kingdom to the west, where the sons of Alexander Jannaeus, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, were fighting for power. Aretas III led an army to Jerusalem, but it was the new power in the region, the Romans, who decided the conflict and ordered Aretas out of Judaea.[37] Soon after, Pompey recognised the independence of the group of cities known as the Decapolis.[38] Although there is much disagreement, both in antiquity and today, as to

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"In Damascus the ethnarch of King Aretas was guarding the city of the Damascenes to arrest me, and I was let down through a window in a basket, through the wall, and fled from his hands."

[35] Starcky 1966 col. 915; Wenning 1992 pp. 80–81.

[36] Bowersock 1983 p. 68 argues that Paul's language clearly implies that the city was under Nabataean control. Sartre 2005 p. 83, on the other hand, points out that it would be very unusual for the sources, particularly Josephus, to be silent if the Romans had gifted Damascus to the Nabataeans. Furthermore, the territory of Agrippa I would have stood between Nabataean lands in the southern Hauran and Damascus, making it seem unlikely that Aretas IV could easily add the city to the kingdom.

[37] Josephus, *AJ* 13.29–33. It was one of Pompey's officers, M. Aemilius Scaurus, who decided the fate of the various parties when he visited Jerusalem in 64 BC. Both sides offered him a bribe of 400 talents, but Scaurus accepted the offer of Aristobulus, whom he seems to have trusted more than Hyrcanus, and ordered Aretas to depart with his army or be declared an enemy of Rome.

[38] For the extent of Nabataean involvement in the Decapolis see Graf 1986 and Wenning 1992. While there is much evidence for a Semitic (i.e. non-Greek) cultural layer in several Decapolis cities, specifically Nabataean signs are harder to detect. Wenning's identification of 'Nabataean' elements in some architectural fragments from Gerasa depends on parallels from the northern Hauran, an area which is now recognised not to have been under Nabataean control (Wenning 1992 p. 89). Certain coins and pottery can be assigned a more firmly Nabataean background, and these are found in several Decapolis cities, but they do not show anything beyond the normal commercial links we would expect to find.

which cities we should include in this group, throughout the first centuries BC and AD they formed a barrier to any Nabataean expansion to the west. It is in the context of the Decapolis that we should discuss Adraa and its position in this study. It is located only c. 30 km west of Bosra, and was connected by a road when both settlements were included in the Provincia Arabia. However, very little is know about it before the second century AD, and there is little certainty as to what kind of settlement existed then, and whether it should be included with the Decapolis cities or placed inside the Nabataean kingdom.[39] Both Pliny the Elder and Claudius Ptolemaios provide lists of the Decapolis cities, and Adraa appears in the latter but not the former.[40] In the absence of any further literary or epigraphic evidence, there is very little that can be said either way. The most persuasive pieces of evidence attaching Adraa to the Nabataean sphere are its second and third century AD coins that show an idol block standing on a platform inside a temple.[41] On some issues, Dousares is also named in Greek. However, these coins are too late to be used as evidence for the cultic situation in Nabataean times. There is not enough evidence to show that Adraa was ever under Nabataean control, and thus it will not be included in this survey.

The establishment of Roman power in the Near East succeeded in preventing any further fighting between the Jewish kings and the Nabataeans for some thirty years. However, in the turbulent period before Actium, when Antony was in control of the East, Herod led an invasion into Nabataean territory in the Hauran. Josephus alleges this was a result of Cleopatra's scheming to revive the Ptolemaic Empire, but it also seems possible that Herod himself thought he could gain successes in this area his predecessors had once controlled.[42] In the end, both sides won victories in battles fought nearby different Decapolis cities, but little territory seems to have changed hands.[43] Herod survived the accession of Augustus, and

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Lichtenberger, who has published the most extensive study of religion in the Decapolis, finds very little evidence for Nabataean influence (e.g. Lichtenberger 2003 pp. 221–225).

[39] Two of the most recent comprehensive studies on the Decapolis, for example, disagree on whether to include Adraa in their area. Lichtenberger 2003 does not include it, but Riedl 2005 does. The decision rests on how the Decapolis should be defined, and therefore what to include. Riedl, for example, treats it in this case as a geographic term referring to the "nördliche Ostjordanland" (p. 13).

[40] Pliny *HN* 5.74; Cl. Ptol. *Geogr.* 5, 7.14–17.

[41] See below pp. 196–198.

[42] Josephus *AJ* 15.110.

[43] Josephus *AJ* 15.111–120. The first battle was fought at Diospolis, in which Herod was victorious, and the second at Canatha, which the Nabataeans eventually won. After this

later secured control of the Golan and the former territories of Lysanias and his son Zenodorus on the northern edge of Nabataean territory.[44] This expansion no doubt concerned the Nabataeans, and soon the two sides came into conflict near the Leja, while both appealed to Rome to try and gain Augustus' favour.[45] There is little sign in the sources of any territory changing hands, however, and the situation was soon altered by the death of Herod in 4 BC. Augustus accepted the division of his kingdom between his children, which included Philip being given the northern part of the Hauran.[46]

During the first century AD, the presence of Roman authority, which was now established in the new province of Judaea as well as Syria, seems to have been enough to prevent more fighting between the remaining Jewish territories and the Nabataeans for the time being. There was only one more conflict, towards the end of Aretas' reign, over the marriage of his daughter and Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea. This gave Aretas the opportunity to launch an invasion and he gained a major victory, probably somewhere in the northern part of the Hauran.[47] Herod's appeal to Rome, however, stopped Aretas from pressing any advantage he may have gained.[48] For the rest of the first century AD the Romans were content to leave the Nabataean kings in power and to portion out some territories to the surviving Jewish rulers, but neither side seems to have dared risk angering the emperors by upsetting the situation which they had put in place for governing the region. The literary sources are therefore mostly silent on the Hauran during the later part of the first century, and we lose Josephus' important narrative in AD 66. However,

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defeat, Josephus notes, Herod did not dare face the Nabataeans in pitched battle, but restrained himself to small raiding parties into their territory.

[44] Bowersock 1983 pp. 49–50.

[45] Peters 1977 p. 270 notes an interesting detail during this conflict. The Nabataeans decided to take in some exiles from Herodian terrirory and house them in Raepta, in Ammonitis. Peters considers that this "must have been judged a more secure place" than in Bosra or some other town in the Hauran. This perhaps reveals how fluid the political situation was in the Hauran at this time and how tenuous was the Nabataean's hold on their territory there.

[46] Josephus *AJ* 17.319.

[47] There is some confusion over exactly where and when this took place (Bowersock 1983 pp. 65–66). Josephus gives Gamala, in the territory of Philip the Tetrarch, but it does not seem clear why Aretas would invade here to punish Herod Antipas. Bowersock suggests that Aretas may have entered the area soon after Philip's death (AD 34) to threaten Herod's territory to the east. Herod then countered by moving his own troops into the area, where he was then defeated.

[48] Josephus *AJ* 18.115.

it is at this time that the epigraphic evidence starts to become more and more abundant; this can reveal very specific information about who was in control of certain settlements and when.

The literary sources, then, have described a very fluid situation in the Hauran during the period of Nabataean involvement. The Nabataeans seem to have been keen to assert themselves in the region, perhaps to ensure their control over long-distance trade along the Wadi Sirhan, which terminates to the south-east of the Jebel al-Arab.[49] Transjordan, however, also seems to have been an attractive region for Jewish leaders from the Maccabees to the descendants of Herod the Great. They were clearly an important presence in the Hauran, alongside the Nabataeans, but the literary sources are not specific enough to allow us to determine when and where Nabataean control was in place, and therefore what to include in this survey. For that, we must look to the surviving inscriptions.

CIS II contains the earliest substantial collection of Aramaic inscriptions from the Hauran, and this was quickly followed by the corpus of Littmann which catalogued the finds of Butler's expeditions.[50] More recent studies have questioned some of the assumptions made in these earlier publications, most notably their tendency to describe all the Aramaic inscriptions from the region as 'Nabataean'.[51] The linguistic situation has now been shown to be a lot more complex, particularly with regard to the different scripts that were in use. Some inscriptions use a script similar to that of Petra, with more elongated letter forms sometimes connected with ligatures. Others, however, have a squarer script which lacks the final letter forms that are found elsewhere in Nabataea.[52] This script has been tentatively named 'Hauranite', and is seen as being distinctive from the Nabataean inscriptions, although the division does appear to

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[49] See *Quellen* p. 716 for one of the latest maps of Nabataean trade routes. It is usually assumed that caravans went towards Bostra along the Wadi Sirhan from al-Jawf in the centre of the Arabian Peninsula. A number of inscriptions show a Nabataean presence there in the first century AD (*ibid.* pp. 302–306). From here, caravan routes led eastwards either to the Persian Gulf or to Babylon and the Euphrates. Graf and Sidebotham 2003 pp. 70–71 have shown how al-Jawf was fought over before the Nabataean period, presumably for control of these trade routes. Later, in the Severan period, the Romans also took steps to secure their control over the route by building fortifications near Azraq, the oasis at the northern end of the Wadi Sirhan.

[50] Littmann 1914.

[51] Macdonald 2003a p. 54; Starcky 1985 p. 169: "C'est trop peu pour qualifier de nabatéenne l'écriture araméenne en usage à Suweidā ou à Sī' au tournant de l'ère . . ., d'autant que la forme des lettres de ces inscriptions s'inscrit mal dans l'évolution de l'alphabet nabatéen."

[52] See, for example, Milik 1958 pp. 227–231 and Littmann 1914 no. 2.

be somewhat blurred.[53] We are left with the possibility, then, that these linguistic divisions could have followed a political boundary. This seems unlikely with regard to the different scripts that were in use, and Macdonald has argued that the use of a particular script was determined by the scribe's background rather than any wider considerations.[54] Starcky's survey, however, which includes a map of the distribution of all the Aramaic texts, is rather more revealing. It shows a much greater concentration of Aramaic inscriptions in the southern part of the Hauran, beginning around Hebran.[55] This is particularly significant if we compare Starcky's map with that of Denzter's showing the pre-provincial architectural remains. Even though most of these were north of Hebran, there are still more Aramaic inscriptions to the south, suggesting that their concentration there was not simply the result of a greater population or building activity.

While Starcky's survey is important in providing a general impression as to where Aramaic was in use, more specific information can be gathered from how the inscriptions were dated. Several eras were in use in the Hauran during the Nabataean period. Like in the rest of the kingdom, scribes here could use the era of the Nabataean kings, but we also have examples of the Seleucid era, the Imperial eras, and inscriptions dated by the years of the Jewish tetrarchs.[56] Denzter-Feydy's map (map 5) shows the boundary, determined by the eras used, between Nabataea and the Jewish tetrarchy to the north controlled by Philip and then the two Agrippas. To the south of this line, we have inscriptions dated by the Nabataean kings, and to the north those dated by the tetrarchs, the Emperors and several by the Seleucid era.

We have to wait until the second half of the first century AD before dated inscriptions appear in enough quantity for us to be able to trace the boundary. This for the most part follows Dentzer-Feydy's division, and some inscriptions seem to show a particular awareness as to the political situation. There are, for example, two that are dated to the reign of Claudius, from AD 47 and 49.[57] These fall in the short period (AD 44–53) when the tetrarchy of Agrippa I was attached to the Provincia Syria before Agrippa II was installed. Outside these, inscriptions to the north

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[53] Macdonald 2003a p. 55 where he cites an example that has letter forms more similar to the Petra script, but which are written separately like the Hauran script.

[54] *Ibid*. pp. 55–56.

[55] Starcky 1985 p. 174.

[56] Nehmé 2010 fig. 5 has a useful overview of the dated Aramaic texts.

[57] *CIS* II 170 from Hebran and Starcky 1985 p. 180 from Sur.

of Nabataean territory are either dated by the Herodian tetrarchs or the Seleucid era. However, there are some reservations to be noted with regard to Dentzer-Feydy's division, which also cast some doubts on the validity of the method. Firstly, the continuation of the boundary north-west of Bosra to include Adraa does not seem to be indicated in the evidence from the Nabataean period. The northern boundary of the Provincia Arabia did include Adraa, but there were also two Decapolis cities included in the new province, and they were never under Nabataean control.[58] Secondly, the evidence for extending the line eastwards past Salkhad does not have a basis in the evidence. The inscriptions end not far east of Salkhad,[59] and soon after we leave settled territory and enter the desert. Here, the so-called 'Safaitic' inscriptions start to become common,[60] and they introduce a new set of problems. The relationship between these nomads and the settled inhabitants of the Hauran has been the subject of much debate, but it seems clear that the nomads were well aware of the political events of their sedentary neighbours.[61] For our purposes, however, it is most significant that it is not uncommon for 'Safaitic' inscriptions to be dated by the Nabataean kings, as well as other events.[62] This should not be taken as proof that they were under Nabataean control, rather that they perhaps

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[58] We have already seen that there is not enough evidence to show that Adraa was under Nabataean control or certainly a part of the Decapolis in the first century AD (above p. 176). Two other cities which can be more firmly placed in the Decapolis, Gerasa and Philadelphia, were also included in the Provincia Arabia at its creation. That Adraa was placed inside the Provincia Arabia, therefore, is not enough to place it also in Nabataea.

[59] Starcky 1985 p. 174.

[60] As Graf notes, 'Safaitic' is a misnomer, as are many of the geographically based names for the dialects of Ancient North Arabian (Graf 2003 p. 27; see also Macdonald 2004 for a description and grammar of Ancient North Arabian).

[61] See Macdonald 2000 and Graf 2003 where there is a very lively debate over the nature of these inscriptions. Graf disagrees with Macdonald's explanation for the high level of literacy shown in these nomadic populations as a pastime or game for shepherds, and claims that they reflect "a highly specialized and deeply stratified sedentary culture" (p. 56). The truth may be somewhere in between. While Graf lays emphasis on those North Arabian inscriptions found within settled territories (see p. 34 for Bosra and Umm el-Jimal), the majority are still found outside the settled area. They do not reveal a sedentary culture, rather cultures that were probably part settled and part nomadic. Graf, however, is correct to draw attention to the fact that these inscriptions were produced by people who seem to have been in regular contact with the settled societies, and that they have a lot to tell us about the history of the Roman Near East. A number of texts refer to important figures in the political history of the area in the first century AD (Herod, Philip the Tetrach, Germanicus etc.), and refer to events we otherwise have no knowledge of (pp. 39–40).

[62] See, for example, *Quellen* p. 154: "He was on campaign in the year in which Rabbel became king", p. 162: "... in the year in which Obodas died" and p. 160: "... in the year of the revolt of Muharib and in the year of the revolt of the Damasi".

had more dealings with Nabataean communities and so often chose their era as a point of reference. It highlights how dating eras could be a matter of personal choice rather than a reflection of the political situation. Our third reservation shows this more clearly. There is an Aramaic inscription from en-Nmeir, near Damascus, which is dated by the Nabataean king as well as the Seleucid era.[63] This does not come from the short period when Aretas III was in control of the city, and dates from when the area was under Roman control. Clearly the writer had some connection with the Nabataean regime, and chose to use that era.

Although eras are a very good indicator of political control, then, it is clear that we must apply caution and look to all the available evidence when trying to determine which areas were under Nabataean control. Bosra, at least by the first century AD, was clearly the centre of the Nabataean presence in the Hauran. From there comes the earliest text from the region to be dated by the Nabataean king, in 17 BC.[64] To the east, Salkhad also furnishes many inscriptions dated by the kings, and seems to have been an important religious centre at the northern edge of the kingdom. To the south, Umm el-Jimal was a substantial settlement in the Nabataean period and provides many inscriptions, although there are now no Nabataean architectural remains known from the town. It is the first two centres, then, that will provide the focus for this study, but there are a number of important inscriptions from the wider area under Nabataean control that must also be included. Firstly, although it seems likely that the large sanctuary at Sia was mostly built under the Herodian tetrarchs, we shall see that it cannot be ignored in any study of religion in the Hauran.

Sia

The sanctuary on the hilltop of Sia (fig. 47 and 48) was discovered by M. de Vogüé in the middle of the nineteenth century, and he published the first plans and drawings of its remains from 1865 to 1877.[65] Soon after, Butler's Princeton team revisited the site and published more details, including the final parts of an inscription commemorating the dedication of a temple

[63] *CIS* II 161; *Quellen* pp. 140–142.
[64] This text is listed in Nehmé 2010 appendix 1, although it is not yet published.
[65] de Vogüé 1865–1877 pp. 31–38, pls 2, 3, 4.

to Baalshamin.[66] It records that the site's largest structure was built in the period 33/32 to 2/1 BC, as dated by the Seleucid era. Another inscription from the site is dated by Philip the Tetrarch, and another mentions "Agrippa the King".[67] In the absence of any other eras used at the site, we must assume that it was under Herodian control, at least in the first century AD. The early commentators continuously classified the site and its architecture as Nabataean, and explained away the dating of the inscriptions as reflecting a political situation that was briefly imposed over this culturally Nabataean sanctuary.[68] Sia's Nabataean status endured through most of the twentieth century, and its buildings were often included in surveys of Nabataean architecture.[69] However, excavations conducted by the Dentzers as part of their investigation of the Hauran have led to a new picture of the sanctuary emerging. No longer 'Nabataean', Sia is now seen as the religious centre of the Hauran, and one of the best examples of the 'indigenous' architectural layer that covers the region.

Sia cannot be properly considered without including the nearby settlement of Qanawat, ancient Canatha, only a few kilometres away. The sanctuary is set upon a spur of the Jebel al-Arab, and has been interpreted as a 'high-place' serving the religious needs of the city. The two sites were certainly connected by a road, and Sia's temples were probably mostly visited by Canatha's citizens.[70] The plans of the standing remains drawn up by Butler have not changed dramatically over the last century.[71] The road culminates at the temple of Baalshamin, at the western end of the spur, which dominates the sanctuary. The dedicatory inscription mentioned above shows that the temple was chiefly intended to honour Baalshamin and comprised an 'inner temple' (*byrt' gwyt'*), an 'outer temple' (*byrt' bryt'*) and a *theatron* (*tyṭr'*). The temple has not been excavated, but Butler's plan of a smaller square enclosure inside a larger rectangular courtyard,

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[66] Littmann 1914 no. 100; *Quellen* p. 171.

[67] Littman 1914 nos 101 and 102 respectively.

[68] See above p. 170, n. 9.

[69] See, for example, Netzer 2003 pp. 102–107.

[70] We should note, however, that, at least in the Roman period, those living near the sanctuary did not necessarily consider themselves as citizens of Canatha. An inscription mentions Σεεινων τὸ κοινόν (Waddington 1870 no. 2367). Dentzer 1985 pp. 78–79 describes this community as the agglomeration of houses found between the eastern end of the sanctuary and a rampart constructed further down the spur.

[71] Dentzer's work has provided the most recent plans (fig. 48). He does note some omissions and reservations about the plans of Butler. For example, there were a series of substructures found in the northern corner of the easternmost courtyard which Butler omits entirely (Dentzer 1985 pp. 67–68).

all set behind the square *theatron*, has been confirmed, at least in its general outline, by Dentzer's more recent investigation. There are some indications, however, that we should be cautious as to some of the details of Butler's plan. A modern house has now been planted over much of the structure, and Dentzer was not able to confirm the interior layout of the cella. There is, for example, no longer any sign of the four columns that Butler places at the centre of the chamber, and which he considered may have allowed for a gap in the roof.[72] Such details would have important implications for our understanding of cult practice, but unfortunately we cannot be sure of their accuracy. Dentzer did uncover a block of rock that seems to have protruded through the paving into the cella.[73] This was part of the spur of the hill that Sia was constructed on, and it seems likely that, if the trouble had been taken to build around it, it had some religious significance and some role to play in cult practice. The nature of the *theatron*, a large square area in front of the cella, remains entirely mysterious.[74]

The temple of Baalshamin seems to have been the first temple on the site, and some years after its construction the temple to its east was added. Inscriptions from the structure are dated by Philip the Tetrarch and Agrippa II, thus perhaps placing its construction in the first half of the first century AD, but there is no dedicatory inscription.[75] Butler identified it as the 'Temple of Dushara', but there is no evidence for this god at the temple. A broken bilingual inscription mentions "the image of Sia", suggesting that this building housed a statue of the goddess Sia herself.[76] Although Littmann considered Dushara the main god of this temple, in the absence of any other dedications Sia is now considered the main deity. Again the interior details that Butler includes are somewhat speculative, and should be treated with caution.[77] Continuing the eastwards progression, a further temple was added soon after the second, probably towards the end of the first century AD. Again there is no dedicatory inscription, but the close

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[72] *Ibid.* p. 71.

[73] *Ibid.* p. 71. The rock rises 0.42m above the level of the pavement. Dentzer notes the large amount of terracing work required to build up a level platform around it.

[74] *Ibid.* p. 70. See above p. 90, no. 3 for a religious *tyṭr'* at Petra.

[75] Littmann 1914 nos 101 and 102 respectively.

[76] *Ibid.* no. 103; *Quellen* p. 176. The tablet was found inside the 'Temple of Dushara' and reads Σεεῖα κατὰ γῆν Αὐρανεῖτιν ἑστηκυῖα (Sia standing in the Hauranite land) in the Greek and *d' ṣlmt' dy š'y'w* (This is the image of Sia) in the Aramaic.

[77] See *PPUAES* II A fig. 335, p. 387. His reconstruction of four columns in the centre of the cella is entirely conjectural: "The four interior columns are placed on conjecture from broken shafts lying on the slope behind the temple".

architectural and decorative parallels with the buildings at Bosra, which can be more confidently dated, mark it as contemporary.[78] It seems likely that whoever was behind the building programme at Bosra decided also to leave his mark on Sia. Very little is known about the interior layout or any gods worshipped inside, and it is only the building's location inside this large sanctuary complex that points to it being a temple. The third courtyard and the gate have now been shown to date to the Antonine or Severan Period, well after the temple was built.[79] The sanctuary clearly developed from west to east, and as its cults gained popularity more temples were added and probably more gods brought to the site.

Sia, then, was growing in importance as a religious centre throughout the first century AD. Although it was closely connected to Canatha, inscriptions reveal that it was a sanctuary of regional importance that attracted worshippers from all over the Hauran, no doubt including those areas under Nabataean control. Sia's position also suggests that it may have been a point of contact between the settled populations of the Hauran and the nomads to the east. It lies on the north-west slope of the Jebel al-Arab, and there are few settlements further to the east before the steppe begins. 'Safaitic' inscriptions from the site show that the sanctuary was visited by these nomadic populations.[80] Macdonald has collected the mentions of Sia in the 'Safaitic' inscriptions from the wider area, showing that it was known well outside the Hauran and that it was particularly associated with Baalshamin.[81] As well as serving the religious needs of the nomads, the sanctuary may have had a broader function as a point of contact or negotiation between the two communities.

Even though Sia lay outside the boundaries of Nabataea, then, it is included here because of its regional significance, and because it was very likely used by worshippers travelling from Nabataean territory. We have seen that Baalshamin was the main deity of Sia, and his temple seems to have been the centre of a cult that was widespread over the Hauran. He appears with the greatest frequency in the northern part of the region, and is only challenged by Dushara in the areas under Nabataean control.[82]

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[78] *PPUAES* II A p. 393 notes parallels in the design of the columns with Bosra and Hegra. In other details of the ornament, the grape vine motif for example, there are parallels with the other temples at Sia.

[79] Dentzer 1985 p. 69.

[80] Macdonald 2003b.

[81] Macdonald 2003c.

[82] For overviews of Baalshamin in Nabataea, see Starcky 1966 col. 1000, Gawlikowski 1990 p. 2670 and Healey 2001 pp. 124–126. Baalshamin has also been suggested as the major

Here, however, it is only at Bosra and Umm el-Jimal where Dushara is pre-eminent, and elsewhere Baalshamin appears more frequently. While Dushara can be fixed in a specific place at a specific time, and can probably therefore be seen as introduced by a particular group, then, Baalshamin has a much longer tradition in the Hauran. He is the supreme deity of the region, and those dedications from Nabataean territory that mention him can be put more fully into context by including Sia in this survey. This situation is somewhat mirrored by the architectural décor, where, outside Bosra, the local or 'indigenous' style identified by Dentzer-Feydy predominates. Alongside the 'Hauranite' script of Aramaic, these seem to have formed the outline of a coherent cultural sphere tying together the Hauran. The only other deity present at Sia, Sia herself, must be understood as a goddess of much more local significance, and she is not known anywhere else.

Bosra

Bosra stands at the centre of the Nabataean presence in the Hauran. Human settlement at the site has a long history, and it may appear in the sources as far back as the second millennium BC, but there is much uncertainty as to what exactly is being referred to here.[83] More concrete references appear in the second century BC, particularly in the Books of the Maccabees. We hear how, in 163 BC, Judas Maccabeus led an expedition to the city to rescue the Jews that were imprisoned there.[84] At this point it seems likely that the area was under Seleucid control, although it is not made explicit against whom Judas was fighting.[85] It is not recorded when specifically the Nabataean dynasty gained control over Bosra, but

god for the temples of Simdj and Sleim (Freyberger 1991 pp. 35–36), both in the northern Hauran. Niehr 2003 pp. 277–278, who has published the most comprehensive study of Baalshamin in the Near East, concludes with Healey that Baalshamin was a minor god in Nabataea, and that his cult probably spread southwards from the Hauran. There are two attestations of Baalshamin further south in Nabataea, one which associates him with Bosra and the Nabataean king (Savignac 1934 pp. 576–577) and another where he is called "the god of Maliku", probably referring to Malichus I (above p. 91, no. 4). Like Dushara, then, Baalshamin could be associated with the Nabataean king, although there is no evidence for this from the Hauran.

[83] See Sartre 1985 pp. 25–44 for the very early history of Bosra.

[84] 1 Macc. 5.24–36.

[85] Peters 1977 p. 264. Peters concludes that Timotheus, whom Judas was fighting, must have been a local commander with authority from a Seleucid governor in Damascus.

as we have seen above it was under Nabataean control at least by the end of the first century BC.

During the second half of the first century AD, a large number of Aramaic inscriptions begin to appear dated by the Nabataean kings, and it seems that a large building programme was begun in the city. It has been argued that this was part of a decision by Rabbel II to move his capital from Petra to Bosra.[86] It is suggested that there was a decline in the trade routes through the central part of the kingdom during the first century AD, and with it a decline in the importance of Petra. The agricultural areas of the Hauran therefore became more important to the fortunes of the kingdom, and so the king moved his administration to Bosra. As pointed out most fully by Wenning, however, there are problems with reading such a specific set of circumstances into the evidence.[87] Firstly, changes in the trade routes had happened earlier and had not affected Petra's position. Secondly, there is not yet enough evidence for any dramatic increase in agricultural activity in the Hauran during the first century AD. Thirdly, the presence of the Nabataean king at Bosra can also be called into question. This has often been assumed on the basis of a dedication from Imtan naming "Dushara-A'ra god of our lord who is in Bosra", which can be taken as implying that either "our lord" (i.e. Rabbel) or the god is "in Bosra". The sense can be changed with the English punctuation, but the Aramaic allows for no such clues.[88] Another inscription, however, this time from the other end of the kingdom in Hegra, specifies that it is the god and not the king who was attached to the city.[89] We shall see that there is plenty of evidence for the dynastic cult of Dushara in Bosra, but the evidence does not go far enough to place the king himself there. It is also not necessary to see a royal impetus behind the building programme, even though it is on a large scale, and we have evidence for powerful local families funding large scale construction from other parts of the kingdom.[90] It is safer at the moment to conclude that there was more local funding for Bosra's public buildings in the Nabataean period, and that there is no need to see Bosra usurping Petra as the main residence of the king during the first century AD.

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[86] E.g. Milik 1958 pp. 233–235.
[87] Wenning 1993b pp. 94–95; Wenning 2007b p. 40.
[88] See text no. 1 below.
[89] See text no. 2 below.
[90] See, for example, below p. 226.

Bosra has a long history of exploration and excavation. It was first visited in 1805 by Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, disguised as a local, who managed to record a dozen or so texts. More comprehensive architectural and epigraphic recordings began around the turn of the last century, culminating in Butler's Princeton expedition. Little was done to improve upon Butler during the twentieth century, but recently the Denzters have published the results of several years of exploration and soundings of the town, and have changed the picture presented by Butler.[91] It had long been assumed that the only structures from the Nabataean period lay east of the 'Nabataean Arch', where Bosra's central *cardo* terminates and the buildings become orientated around a different axis (fig. 49). The distinctive horned capitals found near the 'Nabataean Arch' (fig. 50) are usually associated with the Nabataean kingdom, and so this monument and the remains of a large rectangular building to its east, of which only the traces of a few walls survive under a fourth century church, are usually dated to the Nabataean period. Bosra's numerous Nabataean inscriptions, and coins and pottery datable to the first century found in this area, confirm the Nabataean date.[92]

The surviving remains are unfortunately so fragmentary that we can only guess as to the nature of the buildings here. It is usually concluded that the arch led into some kind of temenos with a temple to Dushara.[93] A dedication found nearby mentioning the god and the fact that a temple of the Imperial cult was erected here in the Roman period give some support to the identification, but nothing can be certain.[94] Before Dentzer's excavations, these few remains to the east of the arch were all that was known about Nabataean Bosra. Now, however, it is suggested that the town was a lot more extensive in the Nabataean period, although firm details of the urban layout remain elusive.[95] It seems, for example, that under the later Roman bath buildings to the north of the theatre there was an earlier, possibly Nabataean, phase of building. There are also signs of an attempt to organise the area around a new axis in the final years of

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[91] Dentzer *et al.* 2002b; Dentzer-Feydy *et al.* 2007.

[92] Dentzer *et al.* 2002b p. 86; Blanc in Dentzer-Feydy *et al.* 2007 pp. 21–22.

[93] E.g. Dentzer *et al.* 2002b p. 87.

[94] The text mentioning Dushara is *RES* 676 (no. 3 below), but we should note that it is unknown where exactly in the town it was found. That mentioning the Imperial cult is *IGLS* XIII 9143. Sartre suggests that the link between ruler and god represented by the Imperial cult may have been a continuation of a similar link in the Nabataean period, when Dushara and the king were closely connected.

[95] See now Dentzer in Dentzer-Feydy *et al.* 2007 pp. 13–15.

the kingdom. Again, however, there can be no detailed reconstruction of this, and Dentzer can only suggest that they may have been bathhouses like the later buildings.[96]

Although there was monumental building in Bosra during the Nabataean period, which almost certainly included more than one temple, then, the archaeology can give us little indication of the layout or appearance of these buildings, and so little can be learned about cult practice. The city's inscriptions, on the other hand, provide a picture of a busy and varied religious life, and they can at least give us an idea of who was worshipped. Here, Dushara seems to have held the supreme position, as suggested by the following dedication found on a stone reused in a modern wall:[97]

1. *dnh gdr' dy hw' my...*
2. *wkwy' dy bnh tymw br...*
3. *ldwšr' wšryt 'lhy' b[ṣry']*

This is the wall ... and the windows which were built by *tymw* son of ... for Dushara and the rest of the gods of Bosra.

3: *šryt*: Littmann suggested that this could be the name of a god, hence "... for Dushara and Sharait, the gods of Bosra". However, Healey notes two parallels where *šryt* is used for "the rest of" and there is no other attestation of a god called *šryt*, so this reading seems more likely (Healey 2001 p. 64).

Dushara's position here should come as no surprise and is paralleled elsewhere in the kingdom. More unique to Bosra and the Hauran, however, is his apparent assimilation with a local deity called A'ra (*'r'*/Ααρρα), who clearly has a strong connection with the region. The evidence for this deity should be considered here if we are to attempt to disentangle the relationship between Dushara and A'ra. There are four relevant texts:

1.

AD 93. Found at Imtan, about 30km to the east of Bosra, but the editors suggest it may have originally come from Tell Ma'az, just to the north, where there are the ruins of a small sanctuary.

RES 83; *Quellen* p. 192.

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96 Dentzer *et al.* 2002b p. 142.
97 Littmann 1914 no. 69.

1. *dnh msgd'*
2. *dy qrb*
3. *mn'ṯ br*
4. *gdyw l*
5. *dwšr'*
6. *''r' 'lh*
7. *mr'n' dy*
8. *bbṣr' bšnt*
9. *23 lrb'l*
10. *mlk' mlk*
11. *nbṭw dy*
12. *'ḥyy wš*
13. *yzb 'mh*

This is the altar that *mn'ṯ* son of *gdyw* offered to Dushara-A'ra the god of our lord who is in Bosra, in the year 23 of Rabbel the king, king of the Nabataeans, who brought life and deliverance to his people.

2.

AD 106/107. Inscribed near the Diwan at Hegra, near a niche holding an idol block.

JSNab 39; *Quellen* pp. 343–345; above p. 145.

1. *dnh msgd' dy 'bd*
2. *škwḥw br twr' l''r'*
3. *dy bbṣr' 'lh rb'l byrḥ*
4. *nysn šnt ḥdh lmnkw mlk'*

This is the altar that *škwḥw* son of *twr'* made to A'ra, who is in Bosra, the god of Rabbel, in the month of Nisan in the first year of Malichus the king.

3.

AD 148. The editors note some uncertainty over the date, but it certainly dates from the Roman period. Found on a block in Bosra.

RES 676.

1. *[dnh] msgd' dy qrb*
2. *[y]mlk br mškw ldwš*
3. *r' 'r' 'l šlmh*
4. *wšlm bnwhy wd'*
5. *bywm ḥd bnysn*
6. *šnt 42* (?) *lh*
7. *[prkyh]*

This is the altar that *[y]mlk* son of *mškw* offered to Dushara-A'ra, for his health and the health of his children, and this on the first day of Nisan in year 42 (?) of the Province.

4.

Date uncertain, Littman suggested c. AD 100 on orthographic grounds, but the date may be much later (see *Quellen*). A bilingual Greek-Aramaic text on an altar from Umm el-Jimal.

Littmann 1914 no. 38; Sourdel 1952 p. 60; *Quellen* pp. 195–196.

1. *msgd'*	1. Μασε
2. *dy 'bd*	2. χος A
3. *mškw*	3. ουειδ
4. *br 'wy*	4. ανου
5. *d' ldw*	5. Δους
6. *šr'*	6. άρει A
	7. αρρα

Aramaic: The altar that *mškw* son of *'wyd'* made for Dushara.
Greek: Masechos (son) of Aoueidanos to Dousares-Aarra.

The texts, few as they are, seem to raise more questions than answers. Texts 1 and 3 show that there existed a cult of a deity called Dushara-A'ra in the Nabataean and Roman periods in the Hauran. Text 2 shows that a god called A'ra could receive dedications in his own right, and we have already seen that Dushara could as well. Starcky suggested that an identification between the two gods occurred during the reign of Rabbel II.[98]

[98] Starcky 1966 col. 989–990: "Il est clair que Rabbel II, qui avait fait de Bosra sa residence habituelle, a identifié au dieu dynastique le bétyle local déjà honoré par son homonyme Rabbel Ier."

This was based on the assumption that text 2 should be dated to the first year of the reign of Malichus II (AD 39/40), and thus that at this point A'ra was worshipped distinctly. It now seems more likely, however, that it refers to a Malichus III who ruled the area around Hegra very briefly after the annexation, and is therefore later than text 1.[99] It is still possible, then, that some sort of process of identification between the two deities occurred during the reign of Rabbel II, but if so text 2 reveals that it was not universally accepted.

Text 4 adds a further layer of complication. It is dedicated to Dushara in the Aramaic, but to Dousares-Aarra in the Greek. There has been much discussion of the etymology of *'r'*/Ααρρα, but little on the addition of Ααρρα when it is not represented in the Aramaic text.[100] If we can conclude that the Greek text was meant for a wider audience than those living locally, where Aramaic was the most important language, then it seems possible to view Δουσάρης Ααρρας as the deity's full title. It may be intended to make it clear to those not familiar with the religious landscape that this is the product of the cult of Dushara-A'ra, and not of another cult of Dushara elsewhere. We shall see that there is evidence for a number of different cults of Dousares in the region in the second and third centuries AD. The text is not dated, and it may therefore fit better in this later context, but there can be no certainty. The implication is that when we encounter *dwšr'* in other Nabataean inscriptions from the region, it may be another way of referring to *dwšr' 'r'*.

In texts 1 and 2, the only ones which can be securely attributed to a Nabataean context, the deity is closely connected to the king. Healey therefore suggests that Dushara is "clearly in the background" of text 2, and sees the use of *'lh rb'l* elsewhere as an allusion to A'ra.[101] It is perhaps this close connection to the king that led to some process of identification between the two gods. By the end of the first century AD, a special connection existed between the king and the chief god of Bosra. Whether this was

[99] Nehmé 2005–2006 pp. 42–44.

[100] Littmann 1914 p. 35 discusses Aarra at length, particularly the possible parallels from Arabic. Healey 2001 p. 99 also discusses the significance of the name, but rightly cautions against drawing in parallels from Arabic. *Quellen* p. 196 does discuss the addition of Aarra, and concludes that the author is here using the more "nationalistic" name of the deity for a Greek reading audience. The altar is not dated, and if we are now well into the Roman period, there may be some attempt here to distinguish this Δουσαρης from the Δουσαρης who became popular in Bosra in the Roman period. It may therefore be another indication of how separately Dushara from the Nabataean period and Dousares from the Roman period should be viewed (see below pp. 196–198).

[101] Healey 2001 p. 98.

the result of a deliberate royal policy, accompanied by moving the king's palace to Bosra, is less certain. We have seen that the evidence for Rabbel II in Bosra is not entirely convincing, and the process could have equally occurred in reverse, with Bosra's worshippers choosing to identify their god with Dushara and the king. Perhaps, therefore, we have here an instance of the Nabataean supreme deity being drawn on to express the identity of a local deity. The large building programme of the first century AD, and the flurry of religious dedications that came with it, no doubt helped to spread the cult of Dushara to the Hauran, and it may be that this was at the expense of A'ra. It is more probable, however, that any model of a definitive assimilation or identification is too narrow in what was a city and region of diverse religious preferences. We should perhaps rather interpret the titles of Dushara/A'ra in Bosra as the result of the preferences of different groups, rather than glimpses of how a deity's identity was developing over time.

Outside Bosra's chief deity, several other gods appear to have had cults in the city. The inscription quoted above that reveals the existence of a temple of Dushara also states that other gods were worshipped inside: "... which *tymw*, son of..., built for Dushara and the rest of the gods of Bosra".[102] More explicitly, Al-'Uzza appears in one inscription, but little can be said of her cult in the city.[103] Allat seems to have a firmer connection with Bosra. Although she does not appear in any of the city's inscriptions, a text from Wadi Rumm, possibly dating to the time of Rabbel II,[104] refers to "Allat, the goddess who is in Bosra...".[105] This puts her alongside Dushara/A'ra as the only other deity with a particular attachment to the city. Baalshamin also appears. One inscription mentions him directly,[106]

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[102] See above p. 188.

[103] Littmann 1914 no. 70: "[Tai]m (?), son of Badr, for al-'Uzza, the goddess of Bos[ra]." Starcky remarks that the reading of Bosra is uncertain, and the *b* could just as likely be an *n* at the beginning of a personal name—i.e. "... the goddess of *x*" (Starcky 1966 col. 1003). Healey goes on to add that the "the goddess of Bosra" would be an unusual phrase, and "the goddess who is in Bosra" would be more regular (Healey 2001 p. 115). Littman's next inscription (no. 71) reads "[This is the] cella (?) which was made [by N.N.], the son of Badr (?), for Allāh (?)." Littmann suggests that the inscription may rather read "the goddess of Bosra" at the end, and this may be the same son of Badr as in no. 70. If so, we have evidence for a temple of al-'Uzza in the city. The inscription, however, disappeared before Littmann himself could see it, and the exact condition of the stone or the reading of the final line will never be certain.

[104] Wenning 1987 p. 101.

[105] Savignac 1933 no. 2; *Quellen* pp. 285–287.

[106] *CIS* II 176. This text records the dedication of an altar (*msgd'*) to Baalshamin.

and he may be in the background of another.[107] Again, however, we can give no details of a cult of Baalshamin in Bosra or any of the buildings they used. It is entirely expected to find Baalshamin and Allat here, as both gods had major cult centres not far away. Al-ʿUzza, on the other hand, is a more unexpected find, and this is her only mention in Nabataea north of Petra. Healey considers that "her cult might have been transferred to Bosra at a later date as the result of political changes",[108] presumably a move by Rabbel from Petra to Bosra. Certainly, al-ʿUzza is well connected with Dushara in Petra, and her appearance at Bosra is more easily explicable in light of the flurry of dedications that appear there to Dushara in the first century AD. Finally, the broken sculpture of an eagle carries a Greek-Nabataean bilingual text dedicating the object to the god Qos.[109] There is no date, and every possibility that it is earlier than Milik's suggestion of the second or third century AD. Outside this, Qos is only known in Nabataea at Khirbet Tannur.[110]

The epigraphic evidence, then, reveals a lively religious situation in Nabataean Bosra, but can tell us very little of how and where its cults operated. It does show that there was a large building programme during the reign of Malichus II or Rabbel II, and it is tempting to connect the numerous Dushara/Aʿra inscriptions with this. There is no need to see the king himself involved with the building, or to explain it as a move from Petra to Bosra. Dijkstra has shown how inscriptions in Nabataea could be used as an expression of loyalty to the king, and these dedications from the Hauran could have a similar purpose.[111] The building could have been funded by one or a series of local families, who also promoted the worship of Dushara to cement their place in the Nabataean regime. With perhaps the exception of al-ʿUzza, however, it is much more local religious influences that provide the background to the cult of Dushara. The cult of Aʿra was intimately connected to the region, and Baalshamin had a major cult centre to the north at Sia, as did Allat at nearby Salkhad.

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[107] An inscription from Simdj (Littmann 1914 no. 11), c. 10km south of Bosra, refers to something that was made (*ʿbd*) "for their god Baalshamin" by the tribe of Qasiyu. This tribe also appears in a text from Bosra (*CIS* II 203), where they are making an offering to "their god", who is also in this case presumably Baalshamin.

[108] Healey 2001 p. 115.

[109] Milik 1958 pp. 235–238. The divine name (*qws*) appears only in the Nabataean.

[110] See below p. 217.

[111] Dijkstra 1995 pp. 34–80.

Salkhad

Salkhad lies about 20km east of Bosra. The centre of the site occupies a small hill which protrudes abruptly from the flat landscape (fig. 51). After his visit, Butler noted that "the place itself is not of very great interest to those in search of ancient buildings",[112] as any remains have now been covered by a castle and mosque. Much of the ancient material, however, had been re-used in the modern buildings, and Butler was able to note stylistic similarities with the temple of Baalshamin in Sia. There have been no further detailed surveys or excavations of Salkhad's remains since Butler's visit, and it is still the site's inscriptions that provide the most interest. One of these, dated to the seventeenth year of Malichus II, shows that the site was most likely under Nabataean control at least by the middle of the first century AD.[113]

The evidence for Allat at Salkhad begins with a long inscription recording the dedication of a temple:

1. *dnh byt' dy bnh rwḥw br mlkw br 'klbw br rwḥw l'lt 'lhthm*
2. *dy bṣlḥd wdy nṣb rwḥw br qṣyw 'm rwḥw dnh dy 'l'*
3. *byrḥ 'b šnt 'šr wšb' lmlkw mlk nbṭw br ḥrtt mlk nbṭw rḥm*
4. *'mh*

This is the temple which was built by *rwḥw*, son of *mlkw*, son of *'klbw*, son of *rwḥw*, for Allat their goddess who is at Salkhad, and which was founded by *rwḥw*, son of *qṣyw*, great grandfather of this *rwḥw* mentioned above. In the month of Ab, in the seventeenth year of Malichus, king of the Nabataeans, son of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans, who loves his people.[114]

This establishes that there was a temple to Allat in Salkhad by AD 56, and that the cult was introduced there in around 50 BC. Nothing remains of this temple or any earlier building, but Allat's cult was clearly popular here in the first century. A stele from the town carries a dedication to *'lt d't 'l'tr*, "Allat, the lady of the place".[115] Nearly half a century after the

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[112] *PPUAES* II A pp. 117–119.

[113] Littmann 1914 no. 23; *Quellen* pp. 188–189.

[114] *CIS* II 182; Cantineau 1932 pp. 16–17; *Quellen* pp. 187–188.

[115] Littmann 1914 no. 24. For this reading, see Healey 2001 p. 109. Note also Milik 1958 p. 230 who prefers "Allāt, Dame de 'al-'Atar", and sees *'tr* as a toponym rather than the Aramaic 'place, country' preceded by the article. The original translation now seems more likely, see Nehmé 2005–2006 p. 208.

temple was built, another inscription shows that it was repaired by the same family. This time, the builder is a certain "*'wt'lh*, son of *qṣyw*, son of *'dynt*, son of *'wt'lh*, son of *'klbw*, son of *rwḥw*, son of *qṣyw*", and the *'klbw* is the same as in the inscription quoted above.[116] By now, the temple is built for "Allat and her *wgr*", and not just the goddess. The nature of the *wgr* is unclear. It appears in other Nabataean inscriptions, and in Hegra it refers to a tomb,[117] but its meaning here is uncertain, and scholars have looked further afield to find parallels.[118] Milik's suggestion of stele or idol block derives from South Arabian funerary inscriptions, but it remains the most likely interpretation in this context. Clearly, this was a sanctuary and cult under the control of an important local family. A dedication from Hebran, c. 20 km north-east of Bosra and probably under Herodian control for most of the first century AD, was made by a *mlkw*, son of *qṣyw*, priest of Allat, who may have also been part of the same family, but much is uncertain.[119] It is dated to AD 47, and shows that the cult of Allat was widely followed over the region before the temple was rebuilt at Salkhad in AD 56. We have already seen that Allat was connected with Bosra, but it seems that Salkhad was the centre of her cult in the Hauran.

The only other deity to be mentioned at Salkhad is Baalshamin, who appears in a stele dated to the 33rd year of Malichus II (AD 69/70). He is described as "the god of *mtnw*", which is most likely the name of a person or a tribe, and there is no indication of whether he had a cult or temple in the town.[120] He was certainly of less importance than Allat, who has here a cult centre of regional significance which has many parallels with that of Baalshamin at Sia. Both are set on top of prominent hills, and we can trace cult activity at both sites back to the first century BC. Salkhad could also have played a similar intermediary role between the nomadic tribes and settled population. Although there are no Safaitic texts from Salkhad, Allat was popular in the Safaitic inscriptions, and it is tempting to see the nomadic populations visiting Salkhad to worship, as they undoubtedly did at Sia.

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116 See Milik 1958 p. 228 where the family tree is reconstructed.
117 Healey 1993 pp. 131 and 137.
118 See Patrich 1990 pp. 57–58.
119 The dedication is *CIS* II 170. See also Milik 1958 pp. 228–229.
120 Littmann 1914 no. 23; Healey 2001 p. 64.

Afterlife

Evidence from after AD 106 has often been used to try and shed light on the religious life of the Nabataean Hauran. This sometimes hints at religious trends which appear to have their root in the earlier period. Too often, however, a 'Nabataean' culture or religion is drawn on to explain material when it should rather be considered in its proper provincial context. One example of this not connected with religious practice is the role of Bosra. In the years following the Roman occupation, Bosra became the primary garrison town of the new province, housing the *Legio III Cyrenaica*. The city probably also became the primary residence of the new governor, and so has been described as the 'capital' of the province.[121] This is often highlighted to support the idea of the Nabataean kings moving their capital to Bosra in the first century, as perhaps it would then have been the best place for the Romans to take over the administrative mechanisms of the region. However, Bosra is an entirely different city in the Nabataean and Roman contexts, and it is incongruous to apply whatever significance was given to Bosra in the Roman period back to the kingdom. A whole series of factors would have determined the Roman decision to base their legion in the city, and few of these would have taken into account its role in the Nabataean kingdom. The status of Bosra, then, shows the dangers of including events after 106 in the study of Nabataea.

In the religious sphere, it is particularly the city's coins and those of nearby Adraa that have been used as evidence for the Nabataean cult in the region.[122] Nabataean coins have been found widely in the Hauran, but these are the normal Nabataean issues with the king on one side and a cornucopia or other motif on the other which can tell us little about cult practices.[123] Independent minting at both cities seems to have begun about half way through the second century AD. In the case of Adraa, a coin of Marcus Aurelius shows on the reverse a large platform supporting a dome shaped rock, usually identified as a 'betyl', with the legend ΔOVCAPHC

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[121] See Miller 1983 pp. 112–113. The city was renamed Nea Traiana Bostra, and the *legio III Cyrenaica* soon built a camp there and made the city their headquarters. Millar 1993 pp. 94–95 rightly argues against designating Bostra as the 'capital' of the new province at the expense of Petra, and indeed the concept of a Roman province having a 'capital': "the governor will have had jurisdiction at either [Petra and Bostra], for Roman governors were peripatetic, and they certainly did give jurisdiction at times at Petra."

[122] For the coins of Bosra and Adraa in the Roman period see Morey 1914, Spijkerman 1978 pp. 58–89, Kindler 1983 and Patrich 1990 pp. 70–75.

[123] For the religious meaning of some Nabataean issues, see Schwentzel 2005.

ΘEOC AΔRAHNWN (fig. 52).[124] There is an immediate temptation to link this with a cult of Dushara introduced in the Nabataean period, where a dome shaped idol block could have been a fitting idol.[125] Coins showing the same cult object continue throughout Adraa's minting period, and the shape of the altar and idol block remains relatively unchanged. Clearly, the cult of Dousares was very important in Adraa throughout the Roman period. The deity also appears in Bosra's coins towards the end of the second century. The first has Commodus as Caesar on the obverse and a bust of Dousares on the reverse with the legend ΔOVCAPHC BOTP(HN)ΩN (fig. 53).[126] The same bust appears under Caracalla, but by now another coin type is showing a similar scene to that at Adraa. There is again a large platform, but this time it is surmounted by three rectangular idol blocks, each with a flat object on top, and a figure standing on either side (fig. 54).[127] The design reappears under Elagabalus.[128] There are now two or three flattened objects on the central idol block. It appears once more, in the middle of the third century, where the central block is now surmounted by seven flattened objects, and the two smaller blocks still only have one.[129]

There is clearly a temptation to use these coins in the study of the Nabataean period. Starcky sees in the Bosran coins evidence for an identification between Dushara and Dionysos, for example, and the suggestion is followed by Healey.[130] Milik tries to identify the three idol blocks based on inscriptions from the Nabataean period.[131] Morey goes further, stipulating that "The series of bronzes of Bostra . . . necessitates a reconsideration

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[124] Spijkerman 1978 p. 60, no. 1.

[125] There are several examples of idol blocks with rounded tops known from Petra (Patrich 1990 p. 87) and the ovoid shape of the Adraa idol block could be seen as a development of this. Also from Petra comes an idol block shaped like the Adraa coins and dated to AD 256, which was set up by a panegyriarch from the city visiting Petra (Dalman 1908 no. 150). While the carving shows a religious link between Adraa and Petra in the Roman period, it is too late to show that such a link existed in the Nabataean period.

[126] Spijkerman 1978 p. 74, no. 24; Kindler 1981 p. 110, no. 18.

[127] Kindler 1983 p. 114, nos 29 and 30.

[128] Kindler 1983 p. 116, no. 33. It is also worth noting here another type that begins under Elagabalus which apparently shows "Dusares raising right hand, riding a camel walking to the right" (Kindler 1983 p. 117). The identification with Dusares was suggested by Morey 1914 and has since become accepted. However, there is no legend identifying the god, and we should return to the more cautious attitude of earlier scholars who did not attempt to identify the figure. The significance of the design is perhaps rather in the depiction of the camel as the symbol of *Provincia Arabia* (Patrich 1990 p. 73, n. 52).

[129] Kindler 1983 p. 125, no. 55.

[130] Starcky 1966 col. 989–990; Healey 2001 p. 99.

[131] Milik 1958 pp. 246–249.

of… the nature and attributes of the enigmatic Nabataean deity Dusares."[132] However, the coins are simply too late to be of much help in deciphering the cult practices of the Nabataean period. The Nabataean Dushara and Greek Dousares are two different gods, whose cults must have operated in different social and political circumstances. He is no longer attached to the king, and there is no way, for example, of determining whether the three idol blocks of Bostra's coins were worshipped in the Nabataean period. Indeed the prominence of the idol block motif, which also appeared in the coinage of Madaba and Charachmoba as well as Adraa, could be explained in a different way.[133] At a time when many neighbouring cities were also starting to mint, the idol block may have been seized on as a distinctive object by which these cities could mark themselves apart. It may have been a symbol of civic pride, with tenuous or even no links to the historical reality. It is important that the depictions of Dousares and his idol blocks vary between these cities. Each needed their own version of the deity, whose heritage and importance in the region was unquestionable, and each perhaps claimed that their cult objects were more authentic than those of their neighbours.

Conclusions

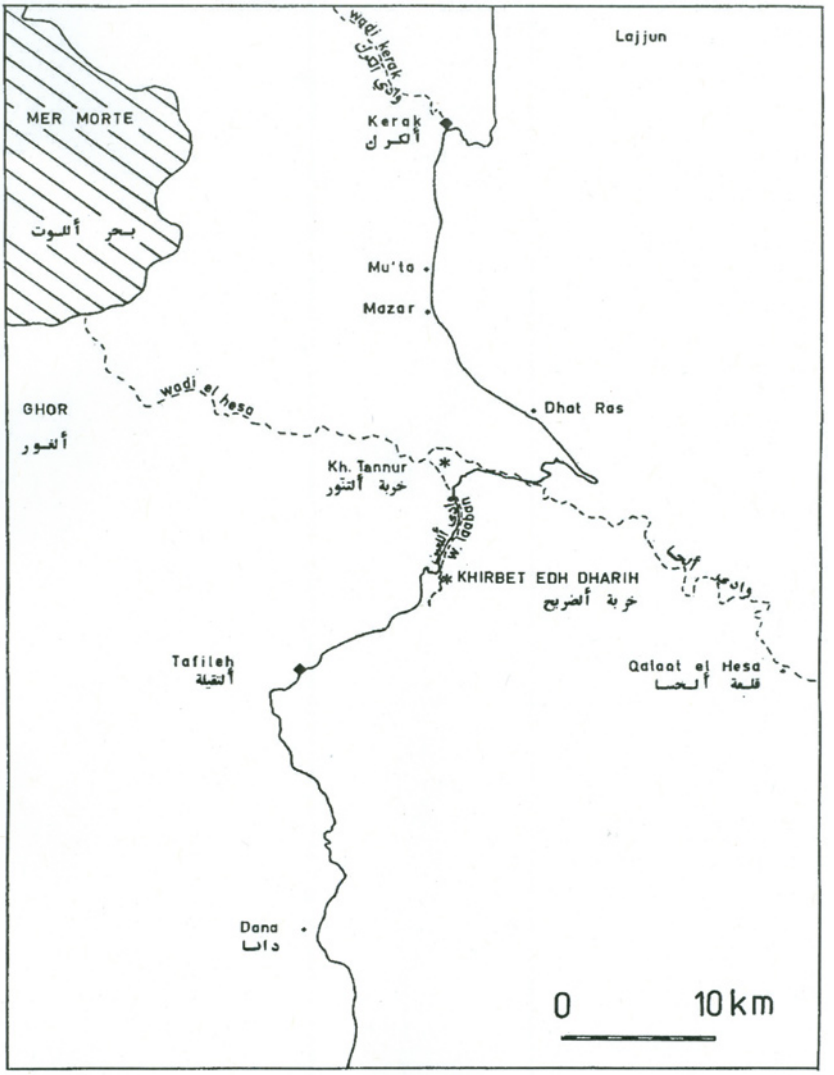
Reviewing the evidence for the Nabataean Hauran and its religious practices, then, quickly reveals some of the common problems in dealing with Nabataean history. Firstly, we have to deal with very little evidence, especially of the kind that can be securely dated and allow us to accurately trace any development in religious practices. This is particularly problematic for questions such as the nature of Dushara-A'ra, where a series of dated inscriptions might allow us to piece together how his identity changed over time. Secondly, the Hauran is the best illustration of how early commentators were occasionally too quick to identify architectural remains and inscriptions as 'Nabataean' without due caution. This helped to create the fiction of Nabataea as a monolithic cultural bloc, within which there were uniform social and religious customs, practised by an ethnically uniform population. This picture is now rightly being dismantled, and a more diverse situation is being revealed. The Nabataean presence in the Hauran has shrunk dramatically in the last twenty or thirty

[132] Morey 1914 p. xxvii.
[133] For what follows, see Alpass (forthcoming).

years, and it is now only Bosra that shows similarities with Nabataean remains further to the south. Salkhad, although it was under Nabataean control, shows more similarities with other areas to the Hauran. It seems that the political boundaries imposed on the area in the first century AD cut across a region which displays some common cultural influences.

In the religious sphere, these common influences seem best represented by the cults of Baalshamin and Allat. These have the longest history in the region and their worship transcended political boundaries. We have seen that Allat is well known elsewhere in Nabataea, but Baalshamin is not so common. The role of his cult in this area of the kingdom must be understood in light of his major cult centre at Sia. A'ra was another important deity, and he in particular cannot be connected to any religious customs further south in the Nabataean heartlands. It is clear that he only received a cult following in this part of the kingdom, and his cult is an excellent example of the distinctive local influences that shaped much of Nabataea's religious life. It is also clear that at some point his identity, at least in the eyes of some worshippers, became intimately connected to that of Dushara.

Dushara is the most important deity in the inscriptions of the Nabataean controlled part of the Hauran. He seems to appear with the monumental development of Bosra under Nabataean influence, either that of the king or a local family or tribe, and is central to this group's patterns of worship. His particular attachment to the king was emphasised everywhere in the Hauran, more so than in other parts of the kingdom, perhaps suggesting that his cult played a particularly important political role here. It is tempting to link his introduction and initial cult to a particular group wishing to advertise their loyalty to the regime. If this is the case, then his cult soon gained a wider following, and by the Roman period he was intimately connected to the public image and identity of the region's cities. In any case, Dushara in many ways seems to stand apart from the other deities of the region. He provides a contrast to the Hauran's more 'indigenous' religious traditions, and alongside them formed an important part of a religious landscape unique to this area.



Map 6. Sanctuaries of central Nabataea (Villeneuve 1988 fig. 1).

CHAPTER SIX

THREE SANCTUARIES IN CENTRAL NABATAEA: FORM, FUNCTION AND FOLLOWERS

On either side of the Wadi el-Hesa, along the road running southwards from the Hauran towards Petra, a series of sanctuaries were built in the Nabataean period (map 6). Khirbet Tannur stands alone on the summit of a small peak overlooking the convergence of Wadi Hesa and the Wadi La'aban, which joins from the south. The modern road passes within about two kilometres, but the temple is only accessible by a footpath which climbs the peak from the south. Khirbet Dharih, a small village eight kilometres south of the Tannur, sits nearer the road on the east bank of the Wadi La'aban. It is dominated by a large sanctuary at its western edge, partially built on an artificial terrace that levels the ground sloping down into the wadi. Dhat Ras, a bigger settlement than Tannur and Dharih, sits several kilometres to the north on the very southern edge of the Kerak Plateau. The road passes close to the village, which was dominated by a pair of large sanctuaries on a shallow hill. A much smaller temple in a much better state of preservation stands at the centre of the modern settlement.

These temples have been dated back to the Nabataean period, at least in one phase of their construction, and they continued in use until well into the Roman period and beyond. Their geographical and chronological closeness demands comparison and provides a profitable insight into the workings of the more rural sanctuaries of Nabataea. As very few inscriptions have so far been uncovered, our examination will rely largely on establishing the layout and architectural features that provided the framework for worship. While a concrete picture of the patterns of worship can never be established with such evidence, it is sufficient, at the very least, to give a broad indication of whether there was any continuity of practice between these three sites, so close together. A number of similarities between the sites show common cultural, artistic, architectural and religious influences, but the differences are perhaps more revealing, particularly in the context of the religious life of Nabataea as a whole.

Khirbet Tannur

During his archaeological survey of eastern Palestine in the 1930s, Nelson Glueck was alerted to the remains of a monumental sanctuary completely isolated on top of Jebel Tannur, a small hill that protrudes from the southern bank of the Wadi Hesa just after it is joined by the Wadi La'aban (fig. 55). His excavation proceeded rapidly, only taking seven weeks to investigate the entire structure, and some brief reports appeared a short time after.[1] It was not until nearly thirty years later, however, that Glueck's final report appeared in the form of *Deities and Dolphins*,[2] in which he integrated the evidence from Tannur into an overall synthesis of the history and culture of the Nabataeans. Many of his conclusions were criticised and corrected soon after by Starcky, who had also visited the site and disagreed most significantly with the chronology proposed by Glueck and the deities to whom he considered the temple had been dedicated.[3] There was, therefore, much uncertainty in the reconstructions and conclusions that had been made about Tannur. With the excavation of nearby Khirbet Dharih, comparative evidence began to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge, but it was not until recently that the evidence was re-examined in detail by McKenzie *et al.* They had access to the journals and records of Fisher, who drew the plans and reconstructions in *Deities and Dolphins*, and Glueck, now stored in the Semitic Museum, Harvard. A new chronology was again proposed, pushing forward that of Glueck by about a century, and numerous important revisions were made with regard to the architecture and its decoration.[4] These articles remain the best guides for Tannur, but there is still dispute over some aspects of their reconstruction,[5] and many important details still remain uncertain.

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[1] See Glueck 1937a pp. 15–19; 1937b; 1937c; 1938a p. 171; 1938b; 1939 p. 154; Albright and Glueck 1937 p. 151. The finds were split between the Palestine Archaeological Museum (which have now been moved to the Jordan Archaeological Museum, Amman (McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 44)) and the Cincinnati Art Museum. The conduct of Glueck's excavations has come under recent criticism, particularly as the site was not properly protected after the excavations, and is now in a far worse condition (al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2003 p. 86).

[2] Glueck 1965.

[3] Starcky 1968. See pp. 208–209 and pp. 225–234 for his discussion of the temple's deities, and p. 207 and p. 211 for his revisions to Glueck's chronology.

[4] McKenzie *et al.* 2002a and 2002b.

[5] See, for example, al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2003 pp. 98–99 where they suggest that the 'Atargatis panel' was actually inserted within the pediment, and not just above the door, as in McKenzie's reconstruction (McKenzie *et al.* 2002a pp. 63–64).

Outside the sanctuary, the only other ancient remains at Tannur consist of a small cistern a little way down the slope and some rock-cut sections of the pathway leading to the temple. Its location, isolated on a summit, evokes the image of a religious 'high-place', and we have seen above how such elevated positions were important in the religious landscape of Nabataea, particularly at Petra.[6] Such arrangements have a long history in the Near East, but the evidence for any activity or building at Tannur before the Nabataean period is very meagre. Glueck mentions an animal figurine that he attributed to the time of the Edomites, and a series of small limestone altars were found that have similarities with a type usually dated to the first half of the first millennium BC.[7] Even if it was certain that these were made before the Nabataean period, such movable objects cannot be used to show the site was in use in the Edomite period, and it is generally agreed that the Nabataean shrine was the first building on the Jebel Tannur. The earliest phase of this is now usually dated to 8/7 BC on the basis of an inscription found on a small stone block:

1. *dy bnh nṭyr'l br*
2. *zyd' lr'š 'yn l'bn 'l hyy ḥrtt*
3. *mlk nbṭw rḥm 'mh whldw*
4. *'tth bšnt II*

That which *ntyr'l*, son of *zyd'*, chief of the 'Ayn L'aban, built for the life of Aretas, King of the Nabataeans, lover of his people, and of Huldu, his wife, in the year II.[8]

The Aretas referred to is undoubtedly Aretas IV, who is given his customary title of *rḥm 'mh* (lover of his people). The exact circumstances of the inscription's discovery unfortunately do not survive, and there is no clue as to where it could have been placed in the building. However, the use of *bnh* shows that it was commemorating the erection of some kind of building or part of a building, and this is now generally thought to have been contemporaneous with the first monumental construction on the site.

Very little survives from this earliest structure. Glueck, who considered the first phase to date to c. 100 BC, thought that the central area

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[6] See above pp. 68–73.

[7] See Glueck 1938b p. 8 for a description of the figurine, and 1965 p. 425 and 511 for pictures and a description of the altars. See also Roche 1999 pp. 66–67.

[8] After Dijkstra 1995 p. 66. Originally published in Savignac 1937 p. 405. See also *Quellen* p. 217.

of the sanctuary may have been marked out by low rubble walls at this stage.[9] There seems to have been some difficulty, however, in determining whether these were just the foundations of later walls, or evidence of an earlier phase. Parallel evidence from Khirbet Dharih, where the walls of an earlier phase were used as a foundation for later phases, suggests that a similar progression could have occurred at Tannur.[10] In any case, there was certainly a crude platform built over the western half of the hilltop in this earliest phase, and a small plain altar was inserted into its centre.[11] The structure survives because the altars of phases II and III, instead of replacing the earlier altars, were built around them, thus preserving the earlier phases for Glueck to uncover. The earliest sanctuary at Tannur, then, seems to have been little more than a small altar placed on top of the hill. The discovery of burnt grains and bones of small animals inside the structure confirmed to Glueck that it was used as an altar or altar-base, with offerings perhaps being dropped though a hole in the surface. It is important to note, however, that the top surface of the structure does not seem to have survived.[12]

The main phase of construction at Tannur started about 100 years after the first building.[13] Glueck, following his early chronology, dates phase II to 8/7 BC, in connection with the above inscription. More recently, however, this has been moved back to c. AD 100, particularly because the similar architectural sculpture of Khirbet Dharih has been dated to that period.[14] In this phase, the full plan of the sanctuary was realised. It essentially consisted of a rectangular temenos, colonnaded on two sides, containing a roughly square altar enclosure in its western end. Both areas were open to the air, as indicated by sloping pavements and channels to aid drainage. The walls of the inner altar enclosure were the highest

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[9] Glueck 1965 p. 89. Traces of rough rubble walls were found underneath the later walls of the altar enclosure and the northern wall of the courtyard, suggesting that these two areas had been demarcated in phase I.

[10] See below p. 209.

[11] Glueck 1965 p. 90: "The first altar or altar-base erected on the platform of the inner temple-court and sunk into its rubble foundations, had the form of a small, plain, empty box, measuring 1.45 by 1.38 m. from north to south and was originally about 1.75 m. high."

[12] *Ibid.* for his theories concerning the use of the first altar. He makes no mention of the condition of its surface, but his suggestion that there could have been a hole in it, and pl. 113a (p. 257), show that it did not survive.

[13] *Ibid.* p. 101. The quantity and style of the pottery found between the pavement of phase I and that of phase II suggested to Glueck that phase I had lasted for c. 100 years.

[14] See Roche 1999 p. 63 and McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 72.

point of the temple.[15] Whatever cult practice occurred at Tannur, then, was conducted in the open air, and the two steps that lined three sides of the eastern end of the temenos suggest that worshippers could sit here to watch, as well as perhaps under the shelter provided by the colonnades. The main altar of the temenos was not put in the centre of the forecourt, but in its northeast corner. This may have been done to preserve the line of sight through the doorway of the temenos to the cult statues in the central enclosure. A similar arrangement can be seen at Dharih, where the doorways to its two courtyards were also placed off-centre so the worshipper could look from the outside right into the centre of the sanctuary (fig. 56). Another small altar was also found behind the central enclosure, in line with the northern entrance to the temenos. Along the north and south sides were a series of rooms that were entered from the courtyard. Benches surrounding a number of these (8, 9, 10 and 14–15) show that they were used as triclinia, a feature that we have seen was widespread in Nabataea's sanctuaries. Unlike the courtyards, these were roofed,[16] and the discovery of pedestals in the corners of rooms 8 and 9 led Glueck to suggest that a small statue or perhaps an altar could be placed there.[17] The functions of the other rooms is uncertain, although McKenzie suggests that room 7 may have been a staircase, leading to the possibility of rituals being performed on the roof.[18]

The altar of phase II was built around three sides of altar I, and two cult statues were placed in front of its eastern side within a large niche (fig. 57). Two pilasters flanked the niche, carved with floral motifs and surmounted by a decorated lintel. The style of the cult statues, and their similarities to some of the architectural sculpture, led McKenzie to confirm that they belong in phase II, and so were designed in conjunction with the altar.[19] The cult statues are among the finest surviving from Nabataea. The male figure, carved in nearly three quarters relief, sits on a throne flanked by two bulls. He wears a Greek style *chiton* and cloak,

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[15] See McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 59. Glueck 1965 p. 126 considered that the eastern wall was taller than the others, but McKenzie *et al.* cannot support this.

[16] Glueck 1965 p. 181 and McKenzie *et al.* 2002a pp. 69–71.

[17] Glueck 1965 p. 177. Having the deity present at a cult meal certainly has parallels at Petra (see above pp. 77–79), although there it seems more likely that idol blocks were used to represent the deity.

[18] McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 71.

[19] *Ibid.* p. 74. More specifically, the indented irises of the male and female figure find a parallel with the eyes of the 'Atargatis panel', which was fitted into the phase II façade. However, see also al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2003 p. 99 who consider that the "quite archaic" image belonged to Period I.

with a *polos* or *kalathos* on top of his head, and the curled beard and hair typical of Zeus. Other features, however, owe more to eastern traditions: his oversized head, frontal position and heavy set features. Glueck suggested that his raised right hand, now broken off, held a sceptre which has been found in fragments nearby the statue.[20] On his left hand side, fragments were found of a similar throne and a fold of a *himation*, with the body of a lion protruding out underneath. Glueck surmised that this must belong to a female deity, the counterpart of the male figure, and the lions led him to identify her as Atargatis, who is often shown with those animals.[21] Apart from her feet and one of these lions, her statue has been reconstructed (fig. 57) along the lines of another representation of a seated goddess found at Tannur.[22] Like the two main statues, this smaller one was also made out of sandstone not local to Tannur, perhaps adding to the likelihood that it was intended to imitate the main statue. It seems that all three had been carved further south, perhaps from the sandstone around Petra, and brought north to Tannur.

The other main area of sculpture at Tannur was the eastern façade of the central enclosure, and like most of the structure this also belongs to phase II (fig. 58). It comprised of four pilasters with floral capitals, two at the corners and one on either side of the main door.[23] Above these ran a frieze decorated with a series of busts and winged Nikes crowning them. Four of these appear in frames above the façade's pilasters, and seven are not framed. The busts clearly take inspiration from Classical models, and have often been identified by their appearance and attributes. Of the framed figures, for example, Glueck labelled the bust on the far left "Zeus-Hadad-Jupiter" as a result of the thunderbolt visible over his left shoulder. A Tyche with cornucopia is carved on the side of the same block which would have faced southwards. A similar arrangement was in place on the far right, with a Tyche facing northwards and a figure that Glueck identified as "Dionysus-Dusares" at the edge eastern façade. Another of the busts within frames is labelled as "Hermes-Mercury" or Apollo, identified

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[20] See Glueck 1965 pp. 195–209 for his discussion of the male statue, and p. 288 for the sceptre. See also McKenzie *et al.* 2002a pp. 74–76 and McKenzie *et al.* 2002b pp. 468–469 for photos of the statue as it appeared on excavation.

[21] See Glueck 1965 pp. 269–284. The most famous statue of Atargatis in the Near East is that of her cult centre at Hierapolis, as described by Lucian (*DDS* 31–33). He does not, however, explicitly identify her as such. See Lightfoot 2003 pp. 446–449.

[22] *Ibid.* pp. 284–285.

[23] Glueck 1965 pp. 142–147; McKenzie *et al.* 2002a pp. 57–65; McKenzie *et al.* 2002b pp. 457–464.

by a lyre over his shoulder. Of those outside frames, "Chronos-Saturn" is identified by a reaping hook over his shoulder, Helios also seems to have been shown and perhaps "Zeus-Jupiter".[24] These busts certainly do correspond to types well known throughout the Mediterranean world, but the hybrid names they have been given by scholars highlights how little we know of how they were understood by the ancient worshippers.

The most important piece of sculpture on the east façade was the semicircular 'Atargatis panel' (fig. 59). At the centre of this sits a larger than life size bust of a goddess with long hair, whom Glueck identified as Atargatis. She wears a cloak, but parts of her face, neck and bosom are covered in leaves, and there is an elaborate series of rosettes and vine scrolls surrounding her and filling the semicircular frame. An eagle with outspread wings stood above her head, crowning the whole piece.[25] Glueck, who did not consider that the façade had a pediment in phase II, placed the sculpture alone above the frieze, but McKenzie revised this, preferring instead to put her above the doorway (fig. 58). More recently, however, the case for putting her back in the pediment has been re-asserted by al-Muheisen and Villeneuve, who draw a parallel with the semicircular tympanum at the centre of Dharih's façade.[26] Whether she was placed immediately above the doors or in the pediment, the semicircular shape of the panel clearly provides a frame for the view of the cult statues through the door.

The changes that occurred in phase III of the sanctuary are only minor compared to those of phase II, and mainly involve the altar. As altar II had encased altar I, altar III was built around altar II, only leaving the façade of altar II and its cult statues exposed (fig. 60). It now stood three or four metres high, and a staircase was built along the south side to

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[24] See Glueck 1965 p. 411 and pls 53b and 56 for the figures on the corner frames. McKenzie *et al.* do not seem to consider "Dionysus-Dusares" as being represented, and prefer to label the other figure just "Zeus-Hadad" (McKenzie *et al.* 2002a pp. 59–60). See Glueck 1965 pl. 146a for Hermes-Mercury, and Starcky 1968 p. 233 who suggests Apollo. See Glueck 1965 pl. 153 for Chronos-Saturn and pl. 136 for Helios. Glueck did not consider that the Zeus-Jupiter sculpture belonged to these framed panels, and it was only when McKenzie revisited the sculpture in Amman that she realised it would fit (McKenzie *et al.* 2002a pp. 60–61). Wherever it was from, there seems very little to identify this figure as the supreme god, apart from his curled beard.

[25] Glueck 1965 pl. 31 and 32, pp. 65–65.

[26] For the position of the panel, see Glueck 1965 pp. 143–145 and plan B. McKenzie *et al.* measured the distance between the two door pilasters and, realising it would just fit, preferred to place the panel above the door (McKenzie *et al.* 2002a pp. 63–64 and 2002b p. 461). Al-Muheisen and Villeneuve, measuring the ruins again, suggested that it would fit within the pediment, and that the eagle *acroterium* would serve as the *acroterium* of the pediment as well (al-Muhesien and Villeneuve 2003 pp. 98–99).

provide access to the top.[27] A larger set of engaged quarter-columns were built to surround the new eastern face, with floral decorations filling the space between the two sets of columns. Along the top, an architrave, decorated again with a vegetal pattern, was added and above this was placed a frieze decorated with vines and flowers. Unfortunately, the surface of the altar does not survive. McKenzie mentions some fragments that may have come from above the frieze,[28] but nothing is certain, and both McKenzie's (fig. 60) and Glueck's reconstructions of different types of altar are conjectural.[29] The most striking feature of the new façade, however, was a series of 12 busts added down both its side columns. Of these, the two lowermost have survived in good condition. Glueck identified them as different aspects of Atargatis, and labelled them the 'Dolphin Goddess' and the 'Grain Goddess'.[30] McKenzie, however, correctly interpreted them rather as Aquarius and Virgo, seeing that the 12 busts were really a representation of the zodiac.[31]

The dating of phase III has caused considerable difficulty. Glueck dated it "by its architecture and sculptures to about the first quarter of the second century A.D.", and considered that its construction started probably before Nabataea was incorporated into the Roman Empire in AD 106.[32] He therefore thought that there had been a gap of just over 100 years between phase II and III. Starcky, because of the similarities in the sculpture of phase II and III, thought that there was only a small gap between the two phases, and preferred to date both according to the 8/7 BC inscription.[33] McKenzie *et al.* claim the opposite, arguing that the period III altar "has notable similarities to the late antique sculpture of Egypt",[34] and so suggests a date in the third century AD. There seems to be little certainty, then, in the dating of phase III, and we can only safely conclude that it appeared after phase II, which the excavations at Dharih seem to have fixed to c. AD 100. The sanctuary seems to have continued in use for several centuries, but it is possible that the earthquake of AD 363 which damaged Petra so heavily also put an end to the use of Tannur.

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[27] Glueck 1965 pp. 120–122; McKenzie *et al.* 2002a pp. 50–56.
[28] McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 53.
[29] Glueck: Glueck 1965 pp. 624–625, plan C.
[30] Glueck 1965 pp. 315–319, also pl. 1 and 2 for the 'Dolphin Goddess' and pl. 25 and 26 for the 'Grain Goddess'.
[31] McKenzie 2001 p. 109.
[32] Glueck 1965 p. 138.
[33] Starcky 1968 p. 211.
[34] McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 73.

Khirbet Dharih

A few miles to the south of Tannur, the small village of Khirbet Dharih rested on the east bank of the Wadi La'aban (fig. 61). Unlike Tannur, its ruins had not escaped the notice of early explorers,[35] but it was not until the 1980s that serious investigation of the site began. A Franco-Jordanian team, led by Francois Villeneuve and Zeidoun al-Muheisen, started excavations in 1984, and it is now one of the best documented sites in Nabataea.[36] Unlike Tannur, the sanctuary at Dharih was attached to a small village. Nearby springs have ensured that the area has a long history of human occupation. The earliest evidence comes from the Neolithic period, and the site continued to be used through the Byzantine period until Omayyid times, although in a very different form to that of the Nabataean and Roman periods.[37] The village seems to have built up along the road leading northwards to the sanctuary. As well as a number of smaller dwellings, it included two much larger structures (Maison V1 and the 'Fondation Rectangulaire') which are now considered to have been a large house and some kind of administrative building or hostelry for the temple.[38] To the east of the settlement, on a ridge overlooking the houses, was the necropolis. A considerable number of graves have been found, mainly concentrated in the Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine periods.[39] Most of these are simple burials, but there is one monumental tomb (Tombeau C1) that seems to have been in use from c. AD 100–363. All these buildings, however, are dwarfed by the sanctuary, which stretches out on a promontory overlooking the Wadi La'aban at the northern end of the village.

Like at Tannur, the main building at Dharih was preceded by an earlier temple. The first signs of this appeared in the second series of excavations, when decorated blocks were found that had been reused from the first building.[40] Little else could be determined from the remains, which had been entirely covered in the next phase. More details emerged during the

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[35] See Irby and Mangles 1868 p. 114 and Brünnow and Domaszewski 1904 p. 108. The site was also briefly described by Savignac (1936 p. 256 and 1937 p. 402) and Glueck 1965 p. 48. See also Wenning 1987 pp. 82–84.

[36] The most extensive reports are Villeneuve 1988, 1994 and 2000. For discoveries since 2000, see al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2003 and 2005.

[37] For the later history of the site, see Villeneuve 2000 pp. 1558–1563.

[38] *Ibid.* pp. 1528–1531.

[39] Villeneuve 1988 pp. 466–471.

[40] Villeneuve 1994 p. 739.

third series of excavations, and the first sanctuary is now dated to the first century AD, with a possible *terminus post quem* of c. AD 20.[41] Part of its western temenos wall, which followed the lines of the later temenos, was uncovered, as were some walls of the temple itself. It seems to have been a smaller square building (15m x 15m), perhaps with three doors, which was open to the air. Inside, there was some kind of raised construction, in the same position as the cult platform of the later temple. Outside, at the side of the temple, a small sacrificial altar was built on the foundation of a much older Iron Age wall, but there is no indication of any monumental building during that period.[42] The first temple was destroyed at some point towards the end of the first century AD and replaced immediately by the temple of the main phase. Like at Tannur, in many places this followed the lines of the older building, revealing a reluctance on the part of the builders to break away completely from the old structure.

The layout of the main phase of the sanctuary at Dharih, with its two large courtyards, is unique in Nabataea (fig. 56). The nearest parallel for such an arrangement can be found just to the north of the kingdom at the sanctuary of Sia.[43] The first courtyard is so far less well understood than the second. It was entered through a narrow gateway to the south which was followed by triclinia on the left. The excavators have surmised that a series of rooms, similar to those around the second courtyard, probably existed on both sides here too. There is no evidence that the first courtyard was ever paved, and Villeneuve suggests that it would have been a place of assembly for worshippers to gather before moving onto the second courtyard, where the rituals were carried out.[44] This was entered through a more elaborate gateway, which led into a covered porch and then on into the courtyard itself.[45] Like at Tannur, this was surrounded by steps and colonnades, again providing a place for worshippers to sit or shelter. Lining the sides of the courtyard were a series of rooms, and so far Villeneuve and his team have identified a triclinium and open air kitchen in the southwest corner, and what was probably a stairway leading to the roof of the western portico.[46] As there was also access to the roof of the temple, it seems likely that some part of the rituals was conducted above

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[41] This is provided by pottery finds inside the temple. See al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 497.
[42] Villeneuve 2000 pp. 1532–1535, fig. 6.
[43] See above pp. 181–185.
[44] Villeneuve 1994 p. 741.
[45] *Ibid*. p. 741, fig. 3 and Villeneuve 2000 p. 1538.
[46] Villeneuve 2000 pp. 1539–1541.

the courtyard. While the altar of the earlier temple was carefully paved over during the construction of one of these side rooms, a new smaller altar seems to have been erected at the eastern side of the temple.[47] The excavators consider this to be too small to have been the sanctuary's main altar, and feel that a larger one will be found somewhere on the eastern side of the courtyard, in a similar position to that of Tannur, when that area is uncovered.[48] Also on the eastern side of the courtyard was a second gateway, aligned with the front of the temple. As this was not as large or ornate as the main doorway to the south, it is usually suggested that it functioned as a kind of service entrance for priests or other functionaries, who would therefore be properly separated from the main crowd of worshippers. One other notable feature of the courtyard is two large underground chambers or cisterns, one running along the western side of the temple and another to the north.[49]

The temple itself sits in the northern half of the second courtyard. It had three main compartments. The wide doorway led through to an open air vestibule, only decorated on its upper parts by a stuccoed cornice. Originally, three doorways led through to the central cella, but at some point the two side doors were blocked up and replaced with niches. The cella itself was heavily decorated with stucco and, unlike the vestibule or the cult platform, seems to have been covered.[50] Opening out onto the cella was the main focus of the temple, a square raised cult platform, surrounded on three sides by columns (fig. 62). When it was first built, two stairways led to the top, where three holes were arranged in the centre of the platform. The excavators suggest that the large central hole may have been for fixing an idol block, while the smaller holes on either side were apparently for the draining of blood or libations into a small receptacle under the pavement. At a later stage, probably during the second century AD, extra holes were added in the northeast and southwest corners of the platform and the two staircases were blocked up and replaced

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[47] Al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 497.

[48] Al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2003 p. 98.

[49] The chamber to the west is marked on Villeneuve 2000 fig. 9 as probably being a cistern. The underground chamber to the north of the temple is mentioned in al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 497, but it has not yet been excavated.

[50] There seems to be, however, some uncertainty as to which parts of the temple were actually roofed. Villeneuve first considered the cella to be covered and the cult platform uncovered (2000 p. 1541 and 1556). Now, however, while the cella is still considered likely to have been covered, there is not so much certainty that the cult platform was open air, and it seems that the series of small rooms around the platform were roofed (al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 493).

with one larger central set of steps. The north-eastern set of holes was similar and seems to have been intended as a base for another idol block, while those in the southwest corner have been interpreted as either an extra drain or another idol block socket.[51] Below the platform were two symmetrical crypts, with another under the small room to the east of the platform, which were accessed by a staircase in the northeast corner. Four small rooms were arranged around the platform, but their exact function is uncertain. The temple plan is well attested in Nabataea. We are reminded most immediately of the Temple of the Winged Lions at Petra, where two staircases also led to a colonnaded platform that probably held an idol block.[52] Villeneuve also draws a parallel with the coins of Bostra, which as we have seen show a platform with an arrangement of three idol blocks and a central staircase.[53]

The main area of decoration on the temple was its southern façade (fig. 63). This was first reconstructed and studied in detail by Dentzer-Feydy, but since her publication a significant amount of detail has been added from excavations.[54] She was the first to realise that the main sanctuary at Dharih, and the second phase at Tannur, had probably been built and decorated by the same workmen.[55] The style of Dharih's façade, therefore, is extremely close to that of Tannur, and some similar motifs appear on the sculptured panels that made up most of its area, particularly the thunderbolt and floral patterns. Like Tannur, it was provided with four pilasters, two on the corners and on either side of the door. Also on either side of the door were two large windows, which Villeneuve explains by describing the open air vestibule behind the façade as not part of the temple proper, but rather a kind of internal courtyard.[56] Surrounding these

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[51] There seems to be some uncertainty over exactly how the different holes were used. As movable idol blocks have been found near the temple (al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 491), it seems likely that at least one of the holes on the cult platform was meant to receive a block, a practice that we have seen is well known from Petra. Villeneuve first suggested that, after the new holes had been added, only the central set of holes and that in the northeast corner held idol blocks, and that in the southwest corner was a drain (Villeneuve 2000 p. 1556). The reconstruction of the platform in al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2003 p. 96, fig. 82 also suggests that the platform only ever held two idol blocks. Later, however, it is claimed that all three holes held idol blocks: "Thus, in this phase, there is a cult of a triad of betyls strangely diagonal and not frontally placed" (al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 493), but there is no explanation for the change of opinion.

[52] See above pp. 53–55.

[53] Villeneuve 2000 p. 1556. For Bostra's coins, see above pp. 196–198.

[54] Dentzer-Feydy 1990.

[55] *Ibid.* p. 231.

[56] Villeneuve 2000 p. 1543.

was a series of sculptured panels, one of which appears to show a she-wolf with Romulus and Remus suckling underneath. Another perhaps explicitly Roman motif may be seen in a nearby panel, where two military standards flank a scene which has unfortunately been completely obscured by later iconoclasts.[57] Lucian's description of the cult at Hierapolis and the religious *semeion* is immediately brought to mind, and al-Muheisen and Villeneuve suggests that the scene may therefore show a triad, but this does not seem likely.[58] Like at Tannur, the frieze of Dharih's main façade also carried a series of busts. Here, the signs of the zodiac, clearly shown by their distinctive attributes, alternated with winged victories crowning them.[59] Above, the pediment showed a variety of mythological creatures, but little sense has yet been made of the whole composition. In the centre was a tympanum, from which very little sculpture survives. The few fragments that have been reconstructed may show a Zeus figure and a Tyche, and have been compared to the main cult statues at Tannur.[60] However, it ought to be stressed that it is still uncertain as to whether even a male and female figure should be reconstructed in this space.

The sanctuary at Dharih continued in use in this form until it was severely damaged by the earthquake of AD 363. After this, and during the Byzantine period, the character of the sanctuary changed dramatically. While houses and other buildings outside the sanctuary fell out of use, a number of dwellings were erected in the second courtyard. The general impression is of a fortified settlement, with the walls of the courtyard being used as defences.[61] At some later point, the cult platform, enclosed by its surrounding columns, seems to have been changed into some kind of triclinium, with benches being added on top.[62] On the whole, however,

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[57] For photos and a discussion of these panels, see Villeneuve 2000 pp. 1543–1546.

[58] See particularly al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 494 where it is claimed that the panel shows "a triad with standards (either Roman military *signa* with the Capitoline triad or religious *semeia* of oriental deities)." While the panel undoubtedly shows military standards, there is no such explicit indication of a triad. The suggestion becomes easier to accept if it was certain that three idol blocks were displayed on the platform, but this is not the case. There is also not necessarily any connection between the scene shown on the panel and the deities worshipped inside the temple.

[59] See Villeneuve 2000 fig. 15–18 for photos of these sculptures.

[60] al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 pp. 494–495.

[61] *Ibid*. p. 496.

[62] See Villeneuve 2000 p. 1561. The temple cella seems to have been used as a church during the Christian period. Later, at the beginning of the Islamic period during the seventh or eighth century, the complex lost its religious function. Various agricultural installations were built in the temenos and the cella itself seems to have become a dining-room with benches.

the Nabataean and Roman main phase of the sanctuary remained undisturbed, and in most parts it was relatively easy for the excavators to build an impression of how it had appeared.

Dhat Ras

Less than eight kilometres northeast of Khirbet Tannur, the temples at Dhat Ras are the least known of all these three sites. They received some attention from the early commentators,[63] but it was not until recently that any scholars investigated the town in earnest. Dhat Ras has three temples which, like Dharih, are set amid the ruins of an ancient village, although this seems to have been considerably larger than the settlement at Dharih. It is the only one of the three sites where a significant modern settlement remains, and there is a long history of occupation stretching from the early Bronze Age. Three temples may have stood in the Nabataean town. The remains of two large buildings stand on the summit of a shallow hill on the northern edge of the modern town. These have not yet been excavated and are unfortunately in an increasingly bad state of preservation (fig. 64). In contrast, the third building, which is much smaller and can be found at the centre of the modern settlement, must be one of the best preserved monuments of Nabataea, and it still stands almost up to its roof on all sides (fig. 65).

The only recent information on the two larger buildings comes from a very preliminary survey carried out by Wenning and Merklein.[64] Wenning repeatedly notes the deteriorating state of the remains, which had stood considerably taller in the early twentieth century, and were even visibly reduced by stone robbery and reuse between the visits of the two scholars.[65] No excavation has taken place, and any conclusions that are drawn are necessarily very uncertain. It cannot even be certain that the buildings were temples, as no inscriptions have been recovered and the interior layouts cannot be reconstructed in any detail. However, as is suggested by the remains at Tannur and Dharih, the largest structures of a particular settlement are likely to be its temples, and this is certainly the assumption of earlier scholars.

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[63] Brünnow and Domaszewski 1904 p. 61; Musil 1907 p. 79.
[64] Wenning 2003b.
[65] *Ibid*. p. 262.

The eastern of the two large buildings is in the worst condition, and the only visible portion of its remains seems to be a southern façade of the temple, although there is some uncertainty as to whether the standing remains at both sites are of the temples themselves or their temenoi.[66] In any case, they suggest a façade that was about 10m wide, with a central doorway of c. 2m and a rectangular niche on either side of the door. These were enclosed by pilasters and apparently topped by an architrave and frieze, the decoration of which survives in very small quantities.[67] Some 74m away from the east temple stood the west temple, possibly built on an artificial terrace.[68] The main area of remains that survives here seems to be the eastern wall of the temple, although that is not entirely certain.[69] It is important to note that, unlike the eastern temple, this temple was built from sandstone,[70] and so it seems unlikely that both sanctuaries should be seen as the product of the same building programme. Again, a very few fragments seem to suggest the presence of a decorated frieze above, but there is little more that is revealed by the ruins. Wenning suggests three possibilities for the shapes of temples from the remains: 1. The standing walls are those of two large temples of a comparable size to the Qasr el-Bint in Petra (c. 30m × 30m). 2. They are the remains of the temenos walls, and we can deduce nothing about the form of the temples themselves. 3. The walls are those of the temenoi, but a platform that could be discerned in the south-west corner of the east temple site may give the dimensions of the temples themselves (c. 24m × 15m). All three conclusions seem possible. As for the date of the temples, they are generally considered to belong to the first century AD. Wenning, after comparing the surviving elements with other temples in the Near East, concluded that this was the most likely date for at least the west temple.[71] We should, however, stress that there can be very little certainty about these dates.

For the small temple, we also only have one recent interpretation to rely on.[72] Eddinger visited the site in 1997 and 2001 to photograph and

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66 *Ibid.* p. 261.
67 *Ibid.* pp. 261–265.
68 *Ibid.* pp. 265–271.
69 *Ibid.* p. 265 for Wenning's suggestion that this is the eastern wall. As Wenning notes, early commentators had identified it as the west wall of the temple, and again there is little certainty as to whether what survives here is the wall of the temple proper or its temenos.
70 *Ibid.* p. 265.
71 *Ibid.* pp. 273–279.
72 Eddinder 2004.

measure the temple and, unlike the two larger sanctuaries, happily found that it had not deteriorated much since it had first been documented. He, like others who had briefly commented on the site during the twentieth century, agreed that it probably dates to the first or second century AD.[73] The temple measures c. 14m × 4m and faces southwards. The façade was the main area of architectural decoration, with pilasters flanking the doorway and two symmetrical niches. Inside, there was a small open air cella with two arches built into each of the long side walls. A large amount of small symmetrical pockmarks suggested to Eddinger that the inside may have been panelled with marble, and fragments of white marble have been found near the site.[74] At the northern end of the cella, a large arch with a small niche in its back wall seems to have provided the cultic focus for the temple (fig. 66). Presumably, either an idol block or a statue stood here. In the eastern wall of the archway, a small door provided entrance to a narrow stairway leading to the roof. While the main part of the cella was unroofed, there was a small attic above the archway containing the cult niche that was most probably used for storage. Further up, the roof of the attic was also accessible, again raising the possibility of rituals being conducted in the open air on top of the temple. Below the whole temple was a large underground chamber, slightly smaller than the cella and coated with limestone plaster. It seems to have been a cistern, and drains from the cella guided rainwater to be collected here. The close association between a cult place and water is not surprising in Nabataea, as we have seen in the layout of some of Petra's religious monuments. Eddinger considers that the water most likely remained in the temple as some kind of offering to the deity.[75]

The few sculptural and architectural details that have emerged from all the temples at Dhat Ras were created in a very different style to those of Tannur and Dharih. There is no repetition, for example, of the floral or thunderbolt motifs, and the metopes and triglyphs of the eastern larger

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[73] *Ibid.* p. 23.

[74] *Ibid.* p. 19.

[75] *Ibid.* pp. 23–24. However, the other possibilities that he mentions should not be so easily discounted. As it was particularly difficult to access, the idea of the pool having some active role in ritual does seem unlikely. However, discounting a more utilitarian function (i.e. water storage for everyday use) on the basis that "there were an adequate number of cisterns outside the temple for human use" (p. 23) belies the state of our knowledge of the site. It is not known how big the Nabataean/Roman town was, and therefore no guess can be made at the population or how much water it required. The possibility that the underground vault could have simply been a cistern like any other should therefore not be so easily discounted.

temple do not find a parallel south of the wadi. Furthermore, in the features that can be directly compared, there are also considerable differences. The squared simple pilasters of Dhat Ras' temples, for example, are quite different from those in Tannur and Dharih. They seem in some ways to belong to a different architectural tradition than the southern temples.

Gods

A feature common to all of these sanctuaries is that they have yielded very few inscriptions, giving us very little idea of the deities that may have been worshipped in the region. There are, however, two exceptions from Tannur:

1.

A small stele discovered during Glueck's excavations:

Savignac 1937 pp. 408–409; Milik 1958 pp. 237–238; Glueck 1965 pp. 514–515; Healey 2001 p. 61 and 127.

1. *[d]y ʿbd qsmlk*
2. *lqs ʾlh*
3. *ḥwrwʾ*

[That which] *qsmlk* made, for Qos, the god of *ḥwrwʾ*

3: *ḥwrwʾ*: Savignac interpreted this as the personal name *ḥwrw* (for which there are parallels) with the following aleph as an abbreviation of *ʾmnʾ* (sculptor). With the appearance of the same word in the below inscription, however, Milik suggested that it was rather the ancient place name of Tannur. Healey also considers it most likely a place name, although not necessarily of Tannur itself.

2.

Inscribed on the side of an altar:

Milik 1958 pp. 237–238.

1. *dy qrb mtyʾl*
2. *[b]r [ʿw]tʾl*
3. *lḥwrwy*

That which *mtyʾl* son of *ʿwtʾl* offered to *ḥwrwy*.

This second inscription probably then also refers to Qos as the god of *ḥwrw'*, and he was clearly particularly connected to the sanctuary at Tannur. We have seen that the god is also found in a bilingual Greek-Nabataean text from Bosra, but this is not dated.[76] Otherwise, he is not known from Nabataea. Qos does, however, have a strong connection to the Edomite kingdom, which held sway over the fertile areas between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba from about the tenth century BC to the sixth century BC. The evidence for Edomite religion comes from a range of Biblical, archaeological and epigraphic sources, as does that for the worship of Qos in this period.[77] The beliefs and practices surrounding the deity in that period are not well understood, and in any case Qos appears here in quite a different context. It can be of little use in helping us determine how he was understood in the Nabataean period at Tannur.

These are the only inscriptions to name one of Tannur's gods, but they have taken a surprisingly small place in the discussion of who was worshipped there. Glueck decided very soon after his excavations that Zeus-Hadad was Tannur's main god, as he considered him to be represented in the main cult statue.[78] He developed the argument in *Deities and Dolphins*, where the chief deity is labelled "Zeus-Hadad-Jupiter" or "Zeus-Hadad". The bearded male figure, flanked by bulls and carrying a sceptre or a thunderbolt, draws Glueck into a number of comparisons with representations of Zeus and Hadad from all over the Near East. Clearly, these are common accoutrements to a large number of important male deities in the Graeco-Roman and Mesopotamian worlds. The Qos inscription is not linked with the sculpture, and, while Glueck suggested that the Nabataeans could refer to their supreme god as Qos, he is not given a particularly important place at Tannur.[79] Starcky, on the other hand, laid much more emphasis on the inscription, and thought that the male statue ought to be identified as Qos.[80] Furthermore, he suggested that we should consider the cult at Tannur as not being specifically 'Nabataean', and rather a continuation of the "naturiste" religion of the Edomite population.[81] More recently, Millar has followed Starcky's approach, avoiding all mention of Zeus or Hadad and stating that "a Nabataean inscription shows that the

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[76] See above p. 193.
[77] See Bartlett 1989 pp. 200–207 and Vriezen 1965 in general.
[78] See, for example, Glueck 1965 p. 86.
[79] Glueck 1965 pp. 514–515.
[80] Starcky 1968 p. 209: "En fait, le seul dieu nommé dans les inscriptions de Tannur est le dieu édomite Qos, qui doit être identifié au Zeus-Hadad du relief cultuel…"
[81] *Ibid*. p. 210.

(or a) deity worshipped there was the Idumaean god Qos".[82] Healey has added Dushara in the equation, suggesting that Tannur was "dedicated to a version of Qōs-Dushara as a supreme deity with international claims".[83] McKenzie follows Healey, stating that "the male cult statue . . . could represent the god of the sanctuary dedicated to a version of Qos-Dushara, in the form of Zeus-Hadad".[84]

There have been a wide variety of opinions, then, as to whom the sanctuary at Tannur was dedicated or who is represented in the male cult statue. It is firstly important to state that there should be no difficulty in concluding that Qos was worshipped at Tannur in the Nabataean period. We have seen that he is known from another contemporary inscription. A continuing awareness of the name is also shown in its repeated use in personal names, like *Qwsmlk*, particularly in Nabataea and Egypt.[85] While his appearance in a personal name does not indicate that Qos was still worshipped, its frequent occurrence perhaps gives the impression that the name continued to hold some significance in many areas. Furthermore, the fact that this dedication was made by *Qwsmlk* shows an affinity here between the personal name and the worship of the god. The appearance of Qos at Tannur, then, is consistent with this picture of a widespread deity who was still well known in the Nabataean period. However, it is also important to note that there is not necessarily any connection between the stele with the Qos inscription and the male cult statue. The stele seems to have been displayed on one of the sanctuary's walls, as the remnants of cement on its back surface suggest, but there is no indication of how prominent a position it took, or of its relationship to the cult statues. It therefore goes too far to claim that Tannur was dedicated to Qos, even though it is certain that he was worshipped there. That is as far as the evidence will take us, and introducing any other deities to the site does not help to clarify our picture of the cultic situation.

We are in an even worse position for trying to determine the identity of the chief female deity at Tannur, as no goddess is mentioned in any inscription from the site. Again, a wide variety of names have been

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[82] Millar 1993 p. 390.
[83] Healey 2001 p. 140.
[84] McKenzie *et al.* 2002b p. 469.
[85] Bartlett 1989 pp. 204–207. It is worth mentioning here a Greek-Nabataean bilingual text from near Amman which carries a dedication to a deity who is identified as Ba'al-Pe'or in the Greek. He is another god particularly associated with the Moabite kingdom, and so it seems that Moabite religious traditions were continuing in some form in the Nabataean and Roman periods (the text is Jaussen and Savignac 1909; see also Graf 2004 p. 149).

suggested. Glueck saw Atargatis alongside Hadad, mainly because of the lions flanking her throne.[86] Starcky saw more evidence of Derketo of Ascalon alongside Qos, largely on the strength of her mythological connection with fish and dolphins, which appear regularly on the sculpture at Tannur.[87] Healey saw no reason for a specific link with the sea, and thought that Allat or Al-'Uzza would fit well alongside his Qos-Dushara.[88] Hammond, in keeping with his identifications of the goddess at Petra, considered Isis to be the chief consort.[89] There is no certainty, then, or even any preferred candidate, for who the chief female statue at Tannur represented. The evidence is not good enough for any goddess, and for the moment that must be the conclusion.

Outside the Qos inscriptions and the cult relief at Tannur, the evidence for the identities of the other deities at these sites rests in the sculptural decoration of the architecture. We have already seen that the main phase at both Tannur and Dharih was the work of the same group of architects and sculptors, and that this results in a large number of similarities between the two sites. One of these is the anthropomorphic depiction of the zodiac in busts, which appear along the frieze of the main façade at Dharih and down both sides of altar III at Tannur. The first zodiac uncovered here, however, was not part of the architectural sculpture, but appeared in a statue surrounding the bust of a Tyche supported by a winged Victory underneath (fig. 67). Glueck immediately recognised the encircling symbols as those of the zodiac, but it also soon became apparent that the order was very unusual.[90] Instead of proceeding unbroken from start to finish, the zodiac was divided into two halves. It begins at the top with Aries, and then proceeds anti-clockwise down to Virgo. The next symbol, Libra, is located back at the top, on the other side of Aries, and the zodiac proceeds down the other side of the circle to Pisces at the bottom. Glueck explained the order by suggesting that two New Years were celebrated at Tannur, one in the Spring and one in the Autumn. Divided zodiacs have been observed elsewhere, particularly in Egypt, but there are no parallels for this kind of change in sequence and direction.[91] Glueck's interpretation has not been accepted by all, but other explanations are also

[86] Glueck 1965 chs 9 to 11.
[87] Starcky 1968 pp. 228–230.
[88] Healey 2001 p. 61.
[89] Hammond 1990 p. 125.
[90] Glueck 1965 pp. 413–415.
[91] See in general Bunnens 1969.

unsatisfactory.[92] Whatever the precise implications of the order, it is clear that the zodiac held an important place in the ritual practice of Tannur. The zodiac Tyche was affixed somewhere on the wall, as shown by traces of cement on the back, and McKenzie dated it on iconographical grounds to phase II (c. AD 100).[93] She also noticed that it was this sculpture that determined the order of the busts of the zodiac that surrounded altar III (fig. 60), which she dates to some point in the third century.[94] The zodiac, then, seems to have grown in importance during the second century, to the point where it was chosen to surround the main cult statues on the façade of the altar.

The zodiac also takes pride of place on the temple façade at Dharih, where the busts representing the signs alternate between winged victories crowning them (fig. 63). Those symbols that have been found and restored in the frieze show that here the zodiac seems to have run in the regular order, from Aries on the far left to Pisces on the right. This is perhaps surprising considering the close connections between the two sites, and confirms that the unusual order of the symbols had some special significance to Tannur. If it does have some connection with religious festivals, then, as Glueck has suggested, the practices would have been peculiar to that sanctuary. Outside the zodiac, there is no evidence for the identity of any of the deities who were worshipped at Dharih. The only other evidence from Tannur also comes from the astrological sphere, where the busts of the frieze might have shown the seven planetary deities. Glueck was the first to suggest this, although he could not identify all the busts, and McKenzie, while cautioning that the exact number of busts on the frieze is not known, confirms that there were most likely seven unframed busts.[95] If we take into account that there were also seven Tyche figures, it seems reasonable to consider that the seven unframed busts were conceived of as being separate from the four framed ones, and therefore that the seven planetary deities inhabited them.

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[92] See, for example, Janif 2007 pp. 347–348, who, building on Bunnens 1969, claims that "The order *chosen* for the zodiac symbols could be read in the light of the distinctive theological and iconographical traits of Atargatis." Virgo and Pisces, it is argued, have a close association with the Syrian goddess, and the order of the zodiac is a response to some theological or even Gnostic concerns regarding her worship. It must be reiterated, however, that there is no explicit evidence for the worship of Atargatis at Tannur, and any interpretation of the zodiac in light of her presence must therefore be treated with extreme caution.

[93] McKenzie *et al.* 2002b p. 473.

[94] McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 73.

[95] Glueck 1965 pp. 453–471; McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 63.

Such an emphasis on astral deities does not seem to have been repeated elsewhere in Nabataea, although it has often been suggested that there was an astral basis to some practices and beliefs of the kingdom.[96] The excavators of Dharih have advanced two interpretations of its appearance here. Firstly, the sculptures are explained in the context of Strabo's famous description of the Nabataeans worshipping the Sun with altars on roofs, and the stairs to the roof of the temenos structures are invoked to show how this could apply to the sanctuary.[97] Secondly, as there is no certainty as to whether the sanctuary was built before or after the annexation of Nabataea into the Roman Empire, it is suggested that the decorative programme may be celebrating the Roman victory and the Roman cosmic order.[98] Neither explanation seems particularly convincing. Having stairs leading to the roof is a common feature of many Near Eastern temples, and does not seem to have any special connection with the worship of astral deities.[99] The interpretation of the sculpture as a monument to a Roman victory in Arabia has its strongest support in the Roman motifs found in the sculptured panels of the façade. It does not seem at all clear, however, how the zodiac is a statement of a specifically Roman cosmic order.

A possibly more convincing interpretation however, at least with regard to Dharih, could be one that takes into account the wider context. As Villeneuve suggests, the sanctuary's position on the busy caravan route between Petra and Bosra would have provided it a wide range of clientele, and therefore perhaps a strongly polytheistic character.[100] He sees a contrast between the decoration of the façade, which he considers to honour Roman power, and a more traditional cult of aniconic idol blocks that practised inside. Perhaps, however, these two elements worked together to provide a suitable framework of worship. The astral themes of the façade may have provided a widely recognisable point of reference for those passing by. Inside, however, the aniconic idol blocks may have allowed for some flexibility in who was actually worshipped there. We have seen the importance of personal interpretations of the deities at Petra, and we can perhaps extend that model to Dharih. The ambiguity of the idol blocks might have allowed the cult to remain relevant to all

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96 See, for example, Healey 2001 pp. 93–95, where he discusses theories advanced as to the astral aspect of Dushara's character.

97 See above p. 25.

98 al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 495.

99 Downey 1976.

100 Villeneuve 2000 p. 1558.

those who passed through, and worshippers could see whichever god was most relevant to them in the stones. This model cannot be extended to Tannur, where a god and goddess were specified as the chief deities of the temple by their cult statues, but Tannur was positioned a greater distance away from the main road, and seems most likely to have only received pilgrimages on certain festival days.

The absence of inscriptions, cult images and figurines makes it impossible to discern who was worshipped at Dhat Ras. Glueck suggested Atargatis or Allat for the small temple, and Eddinger considers that it could have been a "weather or fertility god", as the temple was designed to catch rainwater in the cistern underneath.[101] For the moment, however, it is best to conclude that we have no clue as to the identity of the gods worshipped in any of the temples at Dhat Ras. What we can see, at least in the small temple, is that there are no similarities to suggest that the same deity, or group of deities, was worshipped in Dhat Ras as in Tannur or Dharih. There is no indication of the astral motifs so prevalent in the temples on the other side of the wadi, and the centrality and shape of the cultic niche suggests that the temple was chiefly devoted to one god, and not to a pair or group.

Worshippers

The best evidence for the day to day practicalities of worship at these three sites comes from Khirbet Dharih. The detailed excavations of its large temenos and surrounding town have given us some impression of the sanctuary in its local context, and revealed some important details regarding cult practice. The first of these is the size of the sanctuary compared to the town (fig. 61). Clearly, it was too large for the religious needs of the village alone, and its position on the main road suggests that it served those travelling northwards towards Bosra and the Decapolis, and those travelling southwards towards Petra. The series of triclinia around both courtyards shows that a large number of worshippers could be received and serviced at the same time. The large building to the east of the second courtyard ("Fondation Rectangulaire") was originally identified as a reservoir, but it soon became apparent that this was a two storied

[101] Glueck 1965 p. 56; Eddinger 2004 p. 24.

building that may have served as a hostelry for the temple's clientele.[102] The second notable feature of the sanctuary is that it has two courtyards at all, which is almost unknown in Nabataea. Villeneuve draws a parallel with the Temple at Jerusalem, where a division was in place to separate men and women, and a division along the same lines has been suggested for Dharih.[103] Another parallel could be drawn with the central sanctuary at Hatra, where a division ran across the whole sanctuary. However, neither of these sanctuaries is divided along the same lines as Dharih, where the first and second temenoi are of a very similar size and shape and are surrounded by the same kind of rooms. It seems likely, then, that similar activities were conducted in both courtyards.

The focus of Dharih's temple, however, was the open air cult platform at the back of the building. We have seen that cult platforms are a regular feature of sanctuaries in Nabataea, and it seems likely that here as elsewhere it was intended to hold one or many idol blocks. Indeed, the excavators discovered a small idol block on a paved esplanade just to the north of the large house to the south-east of the sanctuary. This was probably connected to the sanctuary by a series of stairways, and the excavators have suggested that the pavement itself was a cult place or that the idol block was worshipped on a nearby roof.[104] We have seen at Petra that there is sometimes little valid distinction to be made between sacred and profane space, and also that idol blocks could be found in domestic contexts. It is therefore not surprising to find evidence of religious activity at Dharih outside the main sanctuary. A relief showing a pair of idol blocks flanking an altar has also been discovered in one of the rooms before the entrance to the first courtyard.[105] These remain the only evidence for Dharih's idols, and we should conclude that idol blocks also occupied the cult platform.

To give some indication of how they may have been worshipped, the excavators have invoked the passage of Epiphanius quoted in the Introduction.[106] We have seen that this gives details of cult practices at Alexandria, and claims that they also occurred at Petra. We have also seen

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[102] A number of discoveries in the building suggested its function to the excavators. First and foremost, a triclinium was uncovered at the centre of the structure. Secondly, a large amount of broken jars and pottery indicated somewhere where food was stored and prepared (Villeneuve 1994 pp. 746–749).

[103] Villeneuve 1994 pp. 739–741.

[104] Al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2005 p. 491.

[105] Villeneuve 2000 fig. 8.

[106] See above pp. 28–30.

that there are serious problems using Epiphanius, who wrote in the fourth century AD, in reconstructing religious practices in Nabataea. It is the description, however, of idols being brought up from a chamber below the temple on festival days that is particularly relevant to the remains at Dharih and Dhat Ras. Underground chambers were built into the temples at both settlements. At the more northerly site, Eddinger is certain that the chamber under the small temple was for collecting water, as it was coated with limestone plaster and several drains fed into it. One of the chambers under Dharih's temple, however, was decorated with stucco, and it was this or the two symmetrical crypts under the cult platform that the excavators suggest were used for storing idol blocks.[107] As Epiphanius describes, these would then be brought out during festivals and carried around the platform, where there is just enough room for a circumambulation. His description, however, pertains to Petra, and none of temples there had underground chambers. Nevertheless, he may here be reflecting a genuine practice. While it is very difficult, then, to use Epiphanius' description to reconstruct specific beliefs, he does provides one of the very few ancient insights into cult practice in ancient Arabia, and the subterranean chambers at Dharih can perhaps be better understood in light of it.

The considerable number of similarities between Dharih and Tannur suggest that worship in these two sites was undertaken in a similar manner. Both have a colonnaded courtyard with steps probably intended as seats for participants. Both have triclinia and rooms surrounding the courtyard, with access to the roofs provided by stairs somewhere at the site. Both have more than one altar in the courtyard, and in both cases they are placed off centre at the sides of the temple. The innermost chamber of both temples was also unroofed. The excavators of Dharih have therefore suggested that at Tannur, instead of an altar (as restored in fig. 60), we should see a similar cult platform for idol blocks as that as Dharih.[108] Their argument rests on the facts that the surface of the platform has not been found, and that the evidence for sacrifice in the inner enclosure is very weak.[109] We can add to this that the inner enclosure would be an odd location to conduct large scale sacrifices, if we consider that these were public acts. The

[107] Villeneuve 2000 pp. 1557–1558.

[108] Al-Muheisen and Villenueve 2003 p. 99.

[109] Glueck concluded that the platform was a sacrificial altar on the basis of burnt offerings and "disintegrated bones of small animals" (1965 p. 90) found inside altar I. He also considered burnt grains and charred bones found in small receptacles under the pavement to be the remains of sacrificial offerings (pp. 98–99). There is no certainty, however, that these were not introduced to the site later.

walls of the enclosure rose higher than the top of the platform, and any ritual being held there would only be visible to the few people who could fit within the walls. Furthermore, like Dharih, Tannur was provided with more than one altar outside the temple where sacrifices could take place. There is also a precedent for a god being represented simultaneously in aniconic and anthropomorphic form. A bust and idol block appear carved together into the rock at Petra, perhaps representing the same god (fig. 69). The description of the central platform as an altar also caused Starcky considerable difficulties, largely because of the positioning of an altar and cult statues in such close proximity. He goes through a number of similar structures in the Near East, but can find no exact parallel with Tannur.[110] Al-Muheisen and Villenueve's suggestion that the platform should be seen as a monumental *mwtb* for the deities should therefore be considered just as possible as that of Glueck's altar.

The internal components of the sanctuaries at Tannur and Dharih, then, might not be as distinct as is sometimes suggested, and it seems they may have also been under the control of the same officials. The inscription of 8/7 BC from Tannur quoted above records a dedication by the *r'š 'yn l'bn* (The chief of the spring *l'bn*), and there is another text of the same official from the site.[111] The name of the 'Ayn La'aban survives today as the Wadi La'aban, which runs alongside Dharih. This is therefore most likely a reference to one of the springs near Dharih, and the "chief of the spring" must have been an important official in the town. The title finds a close parallel at Palmyra,[112] and we know from elsewhere that the division and distribution of water was an important issue of daily life in Nabataea.[113] The close similarities in the decoration and layout of both sites become clearer, then, when we consider that they may have been under the control of the same group or family. They may have occupied the large house (Maison V1) nearby the temple at Dharih, and perhaps been the owners of its large monumental tomb.

While Tannur and Dharih are in some ways closely related, they are however certainly marked as distinct by their wider context. Recent excavations at Dharih seem to have confirmed its function as a roadside sanctuary. A set of buildings beyond the southern end of the sanctuary (to the east of "Maison moderne" on fig. 61), which were contemporary to the

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[110] Starcky 1968 p. 221.
[111] For the second text see Savignac 1937 p. 410; Dijkstra 1995 p. 66.
[112] *PAT* 1919: *rbnwt 'yn'*. See also Kaizer 2002 p. 144.
[113] See Yadin 1962.

main phase of the sanctuary, seems to have held a caravansary and public baths.[114] Along with the "Fondation Rectangulaire", then, these large public complexes could provide the facilities for a large number of worshippers. The surroundings of Tannur, isolated on the summit of a small hill on the bank of the Wadi Hesa, are entirely different. The site's religious significance may have stemmed from a distinctive outcrop of much darker volcanic rock that faces it across the wadi (fig. 68). In any case, it did not have the same facilities that seem to have been provided for travellers at Dharih. There were no substantial arrangements for water storage, nor was there a settlement attached to the sanctuary. It must have therefore functioned primarily as a place of pilgrimage and was most likely reserved for certain festival days. It has been suggested that Tannur may have been the destination for the processions starting at Dharih, carrying idol blocks from one site to the other.[115] The evidence for processional ways at Petra can lend some support to this, and the similar layouts and perhaps components of both sanctuaries suggest that practices would not have to differ considerably and could accommodate the same idol blocks.[116]

As for the worshippers and cult practices at Dhat Ras, again our evidence for that site is the most fragmentary. From what can be discerned, however, it seems that the rituals conducted here would have been different from those on the other side of the wadi. The small temple is quite unique, and certainly could not have accommodated the large public ceremonies of Tannur or Dharih, nor the ritual feasting that would have been held in the triclinia surrounding their temenoi. The larger temples at Dhat Ras are on a more similar scale, but have as yet not been investigated in sufficient detail to determine whether their internal layout is of a similar design. There is as yet no sign, at least, of a similar series of rooms within their temenoi.

Conclusions

Our review of the sanctuaries of this part of Nabataea has presented us with several distinctive features. Starcky had already noticed this, and explained it in the following terms: "ces sanctuaires ne peuvent être qualifiés de nabatéens qu'en un sens très large, car leurs divinités peuvent être

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[114] Al-Muheisen and Villeneuve 2003 p. 91.
[115] *Ibid.* p. 99.
[116] For processional ways at Petra, see above pp. 66–68.

celles de Moab et d'Édom et leur style est plus gréco-oriental que proprement nabatéen".[117] It is particularly the anthropomorphic architectural decoration, clearly inspired by exterior models, that sets at least Tannur and Dharih apart from the sanctuaries we have examined elsewhere in the kingdom. Starcky explains this by making a division between Nabataean and non-Nabataean styles. As we have seen in the Introduction, however, there are problems with framing our analysis in such terms. That these sanctuaries are in many ways distinct from others in the kingdom should not lead us to somehow exclude them from the 'Nabataean' sphere, but rather to view them as yet another example of the diversity of Nabataea's religious practices and traditions.

Not only do they highlight the variation in religious models within the kingdom, but certain features also set these sanctuaries apart from each other. Even though, for example, Tannur and Dharih were likely built by the same architects and owned by the same family, the zodiac, which takes a prominent position in both temples, is laid out differently in each case. Although only some ten kilometres away, the remains from Dhat Ras seem to reveal an altogether different religious tradition. The few architectural remains surviving from its larger temples show no parallels with those south of the wadi. Their layouts are also different, and the small temple in particular finds no real parallel in any other site of the kingdom.

The analysis of these three sites also provides a fitting end to our examination of the religious life of Nabataea in so far as it highlights some of the common problems we have encountered. Archaeological work during the twentieth century has advanced our understanding considerably, but there remains a great deal of uncertainty on many crucial points. Most significantly, we cannot be sure of their chronology, which even casts doubt on whether they were indeed built during the Nabataean period in their main phases. But the major barrier to our understanding is the severe lack of epigraphic evidence. We can only be certain, for example, of the name of one of the gods worshipped here, and even where the architectural and sculptural can be accurately reconstructed, the lack of inscriptions will always ensure that their interpretation remains in some ways doubtful and superficial.

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[117] Starcky 1968 p. 208.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

We have now made an overview of the many different practices and traditions that made up the religious life of Nabataea. As stated in the Introduction, this survey has not been comprehensive. We have not recalled every religious dedication from the kingdom, nor analysed the remains of every religious building. However, we have taken into account all the most important evidence that can allow us to build a picture of the social and religious patterns of the different regions of Nabataea. It is now appropriate to return to the most important question posed at the beginning of this study, and examine whether the material included reveals the outlines of a coherent religious system that is distinctive to the kingdom. Certainly, there are some features that appear with some consistency across Nabataea. We shall briefly examine these individually before making our final conclusions.

The Aniconic Tradition

The representation and worship of deities in the form of idol blocks is perhaps the most characteristic feature of Nabataea's religious practices. There was clearly a wider awareness of this in antiquity, as is best illustrated by the entry from the *Suda* describing the idol of 'Theus Ares' in Petra.[1] The accuracy of the basic outlines of this account reveal that the association between Petra and idol blocks, if not between Nabataea and idol blocks, was well established and survived in the literary tradition for at least a millennium. We have seen that it is not just Petra, but every part of Nabataea, where idol blocks were the most common object of worship. In those settlements where physical evidence of their use has so far not been discovered, non-discovery is to be expected as a result of the circumstances and the state of the evidence. In Petra and Hegra, for example, that idol blocks were carved into the mountainsides has ensured their survival. In the Hauran, where a rectangular stone would have found a

[1] See above p. 31.

multitude of uses in the many buildings of the past two millennia, those idol blocks of the Nabataean period would likely no longer be recognisable as such. Here, while we should always take into account the later context, the widespread appearance of idol blocks in the civic coinage of the Roman period at least shows that they would have been appropriate cult objects for the region's Nabataean settlements.

It is not surprising, then, that the aniconic tradition has often been described as a central element of 'Nabataean religion'.[2] We have seen that those few anthropomorphic sculptures produced in a firmly Nabataean context are therefore explained as being the products of foreign influences, extraneous to this tradition.[3] However, these were sometimes closely associated with aniconic sculptures (e.g. fig. 69), and some recent approaches have called this model into question. Gaifman, for example, has recently drawn attention to its inadequacy in explaining the variety of Nabataea's religious art.[4] This is most particularly revealed in the existence of eye-idols, where anthropomorphic features are incorporated into an aniconic sculpture. The best example comes from the Temple of the Winged Lions in Petra (fig. 3). Such sculptures have normally been explained as some sort of compromise or transitional phase between the old Nabataean tradition and the new foreign one. It now seems preferable, however, given the diversity in religious practices we have seen in Nabataea, and even within Petra itself where this idol was set up, to avoid such overarching models to explain the coexistence of anthropomorphic and aniconic sculpture. Nabataea's and Petra's worshippers could and did draw on a variety of artistic inspirations for their idols, and it is not necessary to interpret this as a conflict or transition between different traditions.

It would not be accurate, then, to characterise Nabataea's religious practices as completely aniconic, and the idea of an identifiable aniconic 'Nabataean' tradition in the evidence seems to be a modern preoccupation. What is more certain is that the aniconic cult statues made in Nabataea were part of a much wider tradition of religious aniconism. Examples of such cults can be found in different areas of the Mediterranean, although

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[2] See most fully Patrich 1990; also Healey 2001 pp. 185–189.

[3] See above pp. 32–34.

[4] Gaifman 2008 p. 67: "The remains of Nabataean religious art are far more varied and complex, and are products and expressions of many more factors than the bipolar paradigm acknowledges."

they were often associated, in both ancient and modern thought, with the East. The most famous example must be the black stone of Elagabal at Emesa, which the emperor brought to Rome despite the suspicions of its citizens at this new and outlandish deity. Stewart has recently reviewed the evidence for their treatment in the wider Graeco-Roman world, and come to the conclusion that aniconic and anthropomorphic cult images were not perceived as such distinct categories by ancient worshippers as they often have been by modern scholars, and that both received similar treatment.[5] This may have some bearing on how we are to understand the same distinction, or lack of it, in Nabataea, and it moves the religious practices of the kingdom more into line with the wider Mediterranean.

We also have clear indications that there was a tradition of aniconic sculpture in the north-west of the Arabian Peninsula before the emergence of the Nabataean kingdom. A passage of Herodotus has sometimes been seen as evidence of this:

> σέβονται δὲ Ἀράβιοι πίστις ἀνθρώπων ὅμοια τοῖσι μάλιστα, ποιεῦνται δὲ αὐτὰς τρόπῳ τοιῷδε: τῶν βουλομένων τὰ πιστὰ ποιέεσθαι ἄλλος ἀνήρ, ἀμφοτέρων αὐτῶν ἐν μέσῳ ἑστεώς, λίθῳ ὀξέι τὸ ἔσω τῶν χειρῶν παρὰ τοὺς δακτύλους τοὺς μεγάλους ἐπιτάμνει τῶν ποιευμένων τὰς πίστις, καὶ ἔπειτα λαβὼν ἐκ τοῦ ἱματίου ἑκατέρου κροκύδα ἀλείφει τῷ αἵματι ἐν μέσῳ κειμένους λίθους ἑπτά: τοῦτο δὲ ποιέων ἐπικαλέει τε τὸν Διόνυσον καὶ τὴν Οὐρανίην. (III. 8)
>
> There are no men who respect pledges more than the Arabians. This is how they make them: a man stands between the two pledging parties, and with a sharp stone cuts the palms of their hands, near the thumb; then he takes a piece of wood from the cloak of each and smears with their blood seven stones that lie between them, meanwhile calling on Dionysus and Urania. (Trans. adapted from Godley)

Roche considers that ths described the kind of practice, smearing a stone with blood, that would have been fundamental to rituals involving idols blocks in Nabataea.[6] The use of blood in rituals in Nabataea seems likely, and Herodotus' description is certainly suggestive of the rites we have seen that might have been carried out in the sanctuaries of Petra or Hegra. In this context, however, the mixing of blood should perhaps rather be interpreted in the light of social and tribal kinship, as a symbol of the importance of the tie of blood in such groups.[7]

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[5] Stewart 2008.
[6] Roche 2004 p. 178.
[7] Hoyland 2001 p. 115.

More solid indications come from Tayma. We have seen that this is the only area of the kingdom where the epigraphic record stretches back with some continuity long before the Nabataean period. Also from there come aniconic sculptures, strikingly similar to that from the Temple of the Winged Lions, which predate the first appearance of the Nabataeans.[8] When the Nabataean inhabitants of Petra and elsewhere carved their idol blocks, then, it seems they were operating within an artistic tradition that had long been established in the region. While it certainly seems that this reached its height during the time of the kingdom, it cannot be described as a distinctly Nabataean phenomenon.

Ritual Feasting

Another feature that appears with some consistency in the material from nearly all regions of Nabataea is the presence of triclinia and other chambers intended for ritual feasting. Numerous rock-cut examples have survived from Petra and Hegra, while the remains of the sanctuaries of central Nabataea show that their temenoi were surrounded by them. No such physical remains have as yet emerged from the Negev, but we have seen that its inscriptions show that *mrzḥ'*, ritual feasting societies, were established there in the Nabataean period. The state of the evidence from the Nabataean Hauran is such that we could not yet expect to be able to identify triclinia there if they were present.

There is an inscription from Palmyra which has often been quoted in discussions of ritual feasting in Nabataea. Although it was made after the annexation, the author explicitly identifies himself as a Nabataean. He offers two altars to *šy'lqwm 'lh' ṭb wškr' dy l' št' ḥmr* (Shay al-qawm the good and rewarding god who does not drink wine).[9] We have seen that this god appears at Hegra, and he was also popular in the Nabataean Hauran.[10] We have also seen that Diodorus Siculus, in his description of the Nabataeans, mentions how it is their custom not to drink wine.[11] Teixidor suggested that a ban on wine may be explained by the Nabataeans nomadic life-style, which Dijkstra counters by arguing that the Nabataeans were largely

[8] See above p. 147.
[9] *CIS* II 3973; *PAT* 0319.
[10] See above p. 146. See also Healey pp. 143–147.
[11] Above p. 23.

sedentary by the first centry AD.[12] Describing 'the Nabataeans' as nomadic or sedentary is problematic, as we have seen, and it would be similarly unwise to attach too much significance to Diodorus' comment given the inconsistencies that have been exposed in his account. He may, like this inscription, reveal an aversion to wine on the part of some groups living in Nabataea, but we cannot say more than that.

The survival of hundreds of triclinia from Petra, however, has ensured that the prominent function of ritual feasting remains apparent today. As discussed above, they played an important role there in both the religious and funerary spheres.[13] They could be attached to tomb complexes, and would have been employed in ceremonies to preserve the memory of ancestors. They could form part of larger sanctuary complexes, for example on the Madbah high-place, in a similar position to that at built sanctuaries like Khirbet Tannur and Khirbet Dharih. The presence of the deity is sometimes indicated by an idol block or niche for holding a statue in the back wall of the chamber. They are clearly private monuments. The long inscription in the triclinium of the Chapel of Obodas, for example, recalls the lengthy ancestry of the builder and demonstrates that this was owned by a particular family.[14] Fragmentary texts from the Madbah high-place reveal how the *mrzḥ'* could also be organised along professional lines, which is well known from the wider Mediterranean.[15]

While triclinia were certainly widespread in Nabataea, then, studies have also emphasised how they were very much part of wider religious traditions. Tarrier, for example, in his study of triclinia in Nabataea and Palmyra, concludes that "le banquet rituel palmyrénien et nabatéen se rattache à une longue tradition".[16] There is a specific link between the two areas, with the *mrzḥ'* and the *rb mrzḥ'* (chief of the *mrzḥ'*) being recorded in texts from both Petra, the Negev and Palmyra,[17] but triclinia and ritual feasting are a common feature of religious practices in the Near East and Mediterranean. It is therefore difficult to discern any practices that could be classified as specifically 'Nabataean' from the material we have from the kingdom.

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[12] Teixidor 1979 p. 86; Dijkstra 1995 p. 109.
[13] See above pp. 77–79.
[14] See above p. 92, no. 5.
[15] See above p. 78.
[16] Tarrier 1995 p. 180.
[17] See above p. 104.

Dushara

While aniconism and ritual feasting in Nabataea, then, were part of wider and much more ancient religious traditions, the association between Dushara and the kingdom seems to be more distinctive. This is firstly suggested by the distribution of the deity. In the Nabataean period, he was largely restricted within the boundaries of the kingdom, and where he is found outside this it is usually in a specifically Nabataean context. The best example of this is the important trading port of Pozzuoli in Italy, where a number of dedications show that there was a shrine to the god for Nabataean merchants. The longest of these recounts a series of building activities related to a sanctuary:

1. *d' mḥrmt' [dy ḥ]dt[w . . .]t w'ly nḥš'[. . .*
2. *. . .]l[. . .] wmrty dy mtqr' zdbt [. . .*
3. *. . .]ṣy ṣydw br 'bt mn dy lh 'l ḥyy ḥrtt mlk n[bṭw wdy*
4. *[ḥ]ldw 'tth mlkt nbṭw wdy bnyhm byrḥ 'b šnt 14 [. . .*
5. *. . .] 'ḥr zmn 'bny mḥrmt' qdmyt' dy 'bd bnhbl br bm[. . .*
6. *[bšnt] 8 lmlkw mlk nbṭw yhbw bgw mḥrmt' d'[. . .*

This is the sanctuary that have restored . . . and *'ly*, the copper-smith . . . and *mrty*, who is known as *zdbt . . . ṣydw* son of Obodat at his own expense for the life of Aretas, king of the Nabataeanas, and Huldu his wife, queen of the Nabataeans, and that of their children, in the month of Ab, year 14 . . . from the time when the earlier sanctuary was built, that has made *bnhbl* son of . . . in the eighth year of Malichus, king of the Nabataeans. They have given in this sanctuary . . .[18]

The text is dated to AD 5, and shows that there was a sanctuary established here in the middle of the first century BC.[19] Another inscription gives some detail as to the offerings made at the sanctuary, and reveals that it was most likely dedicated to Dushara:

1. *['l]h try gmly' dy*
2. *qrbw zydw w'db'lg'*
3. *bny tymw ldwšr' dy*
4. *br hn'w*
5. *[. . . š]nt 20 lḥ[rtt]*
6. *[mlk nbṭw]*

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[18] *CIS* II 158. See also Lacarenza 1988–89 pp. 123–125, *Quellen* pp. 116–118 and Yardeni 2000, A 310, B [101]. The translation mainly follows Dijkstra 1995 pp. 72–73.

[19] For the dating see Dijkstra 1995 p. 73.

These are the two camels that have offered *zydw* and *'db'lg'*, the sons of *tymw*, son of *hn'w*, to Dushara . . . year 20 of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans.[20]

There is some diagreement as to whether we should envisage live camels being offered, but models seem more likely.[21] A number of objects found nearby, inscribed with DUSARI SACRUM, confirm the association with Dushara. These include an altar, a large base with six holes (presumably to accommodate idol blocks), two smaller bases with three holes each and two plaques. The ensemble forms a clear echo of the cult arrangements we have seen in Nabataea, and we can imagine Nabataean visitors or a small Nabataean community recreating here the rituals of their homeland. The first inscription shows that the sanctuary was likely to have been in use for at least a century. The fact that inscriptions were in Latin also lends a sense of permanence and suggests the sancutary accommodated a wider audience.

Dedications mentioning the god from Miletus and Delos should also be included here. The former, as with the first text above from Pozzuoli, also contains the *'l ḥyy* formula:

1. *. . .] šly 'ḥ mlk' br tym[w . . .*
2. *. . .]t' 'l ḥyy 'bdt mlk' byrḥ ṭ[bt . . .*
3. Συλλ]αῖος ἀδεφὸς βασιλ[έως . . .
4. ἀνέθηκεν Διὶ Δου[σάρει . . .

. . . *šly*, brother of the king, son of *tymw* . . . for the life of Obodas the king, in the month of *ṭbt*
Συλλ]αῖος, brother of the king, has dedicated to Zeus Dousares[22]

The title 'brother of the king' identifies this as the notorious Syllaeus, Obodas III's chief administrator who apparently attempted to seize the kingship but was outmaneouvred by Aretas IV. This text was probably carved in 9 BC, when Syllaeus travelled to Rome to appeal to appeal for Augustus' favour in the midst of a conflict between Nabataea and Herod.[23] A much more fragmentary insription, this time from Delos, seems also to have been erected by Syllaeus during the same trip. The portion of

[20] *CIS* II 183. The text follows *Quellen* p. 118.
[21] Tram Tan Tinh 1972 pp. 143–144 considers live camels would have been sacrificed, against Healey 2001 p. 102. The discovery of a number terracotta models of camels in Petra gives us some indication of how these might have appeared (see Tuttle 2009 pp. 177–181).
[22] *RES* 675 and 1100; *Quellen* p. 127.
[23] See Bowersock 1983 p. 51.

text that does survive shows that this was more certainly a dedication to Dushara/Dousares.[24]

When we encounter Dushara outside Nabataea, then, it is in a specifically Nabataean context, either as the religious focus of a Nabataean trading community in Pozzuoli or an artefact of Syllaeus' visit to Rome. While his cult did not expand greatly beyond the borders of the kingdom, his distribution within the kingdom was not matched by any other deity. Unlike the other gods we have encountered, he was well represented in every part of Nabataea. The sanctuaries of central Nabataea are an exception here, but the evidence for their gods is so fragmentary that this should not be surprising. None of the other deities we have encountered appears in nearly every part of Nabataea and yet largely cannot be found outside its borders.

A reason for this peculiar distribution may be his close connection with the dynasty, and we have seen how he is described in numerous texts as 'the god of the king'. The evidence cannot tell us how this association came about and there are no dedications to him that can be confidently dated before the Nabataean period, but by then Dushara seems to have had a role as the protective deity of the dynasty. His consistently supreme position in the divine sphere was either the cause or result of this. The association is so close that Dijkstra has suggested that dedications to Dushara can be viewed as a political statement of loyalty to the regime at Petra.[25] This model may be more relevant for certain locations than others. In the Hauran, for example, where the inscriptions reveal a particularly close association between Dushara and the king, and where there was frequent conflict with rival powers, the political aspect of his cult may have come to the forefront. However, Dushara's cult was popular in its own right. We have seen how it became embedded in the religious landscape of the Hauran during the Roman period. While the popularity of the god may have been helped by his connection to the royal family, then, their support was certainly not required for his cults to survive. Indeed, in the minds of some later Christian authors Dushara became the representative deity of Arabia.[26]

The close connection between Dushara and the Nabataean dynasty has often been analysed, but there is some disagreement as to how it should

[24] *Quellen* p. 125.
[25] See Dijkstra 1995 pp. 34–80.
[26] See Alpass (forthcoming).

be formulated.[27] One approach has been to describe him as the 'tribal god' of the Nabataeans.[28] This relies on the model of there being a distinct tribe of 'Nabataeans' who were able to gain supremacy over other tribal groups, which we have seen is problematic.[29] Our information as to the social composition of Nabataea is unfortunately insufficient to confirm this model, but it remains a possibility.[30] Healey labels Dushara "the Nabataean God", but it is not entirely clear if these are the terms in which we should describe him either.[31] Healey's description depends on the model of there being one "Nabataean God" and one "Nabataean Goddess", which seems too restrictive to encompass the religious material from the kingdom. Speaking of a 'national' or Nabataean deity in this way may also be problematic as it requires a 'national' Nabataean cultural identity, which does not emerge explicitly from the evidence. Those living here would have identified themselves as 'Nabataean' in the sense that they originated in a place called Nabataea under the control of the Nabataean king, and we cannot automatically extend this to the religious sphere.

It is preferable to emphasise the political aspect to Dushara's cult, and explain its distinctive connection to Nabataea in this context. The distribution of Dushara outside Nabataea, however, does suggest that his cult might have played a larger role. In her analysis of the inscriptions from Pozzuoli analysed above, Roche concludes that "Dusarès symbolise ici le dieu nabatéen par excellence". It is indeed interesting to note that when we encounter a Nabataean dedication in the wider mediterranean, it is almost always Dushara who is invoked.[32] It seems that Dushara was first and foremost in the minds of those Nabataeans away from their homeland. It could be significant that he is so prominent here. The identity of an inhabitant of Nabataea as 'a Nabataean', rather than as a member of a particular tribe or as coming from a particular town, would have come to the forefront outside the kingdom in foreign lands. In this context, it seems that Dushara was the first deity to turn to, suggesting that he was perhaps thought of as representative of the kingdom and its inhabitants and acted as an expression of some kind of common Nabataean identity.

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[27] For the most recent example, see Kaizer 2010 pp. 118–121.
[28] See, for example, Knauf 1989a pp. 58–59, and Wenning 2003a p. 150.
[29] See above p. 10.
[30] See Macdonald 1991 for a criticism of the model advanced by Knauf.
[31] Healey 2001 p. 85.
[32] There is one exception, a bilingual text from Cos which records the dedication of an altar to al-'Uzza in the Nabataean, and Aphrodite in the Greek (*Quellen* pp. 128–129).

Final Remarks

This brief overview has highlighted three aspects that appear with some continuity across the kingdom. When we encounter Dushara, idol blocks, and ritual feasting, we are in a clearly Nabataean context. The three features combined form an ensemble that was not reproduced anywhere else in the ancient world, and was distinctively Nabataean. While idol blocks and ritual feasting were well-established religious elements that we recognise from a number of more ancient and widespread contexts, the presence of Dushara ties us more closely to Nabataea. His connection to the dynasty brought his cult to every part of the kingdom, where he seems to have been adopted alongside deities with more longstanding attachments to particular regions and cultures.

After reviewing all the material, however, can we conclude that we have here a coherent religious system distinctive to Nabataea, a 'Nabataean religion'? Certainly, the different elements mentioned above appear consistently across the kingdom, and certainly Dushara is distinctive to the Nabataean context. Certainly also cult practices would have to some extent shared the same meanings and deities would have been understood in similar ways across different parts of the kingdom, as they would across the Near East and wider Mediterranean. And certainly, these aspects were organised and employed together in a number of ways that were unique to Nabataea. The important distinction, however, is that they were not organised and employed in one way that was distinctive to Nabataea. On closer inspection, as we have seen, it becomes apparent that these elements were used in cults where a much wider variety of cultural influences found religious expressions. Only by examining the material first and foremost from the local perspective has this become readily apparent.

Although Dushara was central to the religious life of Nabataea and its inhabitants, then, he was not part of a wider religious system, and certainly not a religion, that was particular to Nabataea as a whole. It is rather the differences between the various regions of the kingdom that have emerged most clearly in this study. By analysing the evidence in its proper local context, we have built an impression of the very varied religious patterns that were played out by Nabataea's inhabitants. The religious monuments of Hegra, for example, are often studied against the background of Petra, where they find many parallels. A closer examination, however, has revealed that its gods and many of its religious practices are the product of traditions particular to this part of the Hijaz. Only by recognising these can the city begin to emerge from the shadow of the

Nabataean capital, and in doing so we can build a more complete picture of Hegra in the Nabataean period. This may become more apparent with further excavation, as our knowledge of the settlement moves beyond the rock-cut monuments where the parallels with Petra are most visible. The importance of more local religious traditions is also clearly evident in the material from the Hauran, where it seems that the Nabataean settlements formed part of a larger region that displayed common cultural influences in its material culture. In the religious sphere, this is most clearly expressed in the cults of Allat and Baalshamin which transcended the political boundaries crossing the region.

It is not only in the deities, however, that the diversity of Nabataea's religious landscape becomes apparent. No one model has emerged for the design and layout of sanctuaries, although these necessarily contain some common elements. We have seen that the temples of Khirbet Dharih and Khirbet Tannur show many similarities, but they are also distinct, and seemingly quite separate from the temples in Dhat Ras. The lack of consistency is shown most clearly in the two main temples of Petra's town centre, which are based on quite different models, and must have necessitated some variation in religious practices. The rock-cut monuments of Nabataea's capital, despite their number, have also failed to reveal consistent patterns that might allow us to easily characterise or view them as part of a coherent system. On the contrary, the importance of worship in small groups and of individual interpretations of the gods is revealed. The evidence does not allow us to glimpse ritual practice at these more limited social levels elsewhere in the kingdom, but Petra serves as a reminder that the monumental sanctuaries that survive in the archaeological record formed only part of the religious life of Nabataea's inhabitants.

Ultimately, then, it is difficult to find common threads running through the material we have covered. Nabataea's religious landscape is in some ways the product of much wider and older Near Eastern and Hellenistic traditions, and we would expect there to be some similarities to be observed between the different areas of the kingdom. Equally, however, like in other areas of the Near East, these traditions were adapted to more local circumstances and expressions of piety. Outside the cult of Dushara, there is very little sign that the political control of the Nabataean king resulted in any uniformity of religious practice throughout Nabataea. Furthermore, there is very little reason why it should have. Attempts to construct a 'Nabataean religion' have been based on this presupposition, which we have seen has time and time again resulted in the material being simplified to fit neatly into categories and models devised by

modern scholars. When the material is approached in its proper context, however, the religious experiences of Nabataea's inhabitants cannot be so easily incorporated into an overarching system. To attempt to do so would limit rather than further our understanding, and risks producing a model that no Nabataean would recognise. It is hoped, then, that as further material is uncovered from the sands of Nabataea it will be recognised and approached first and foremost as the product of one of the many different religious traditions that found expression in the kingdom.

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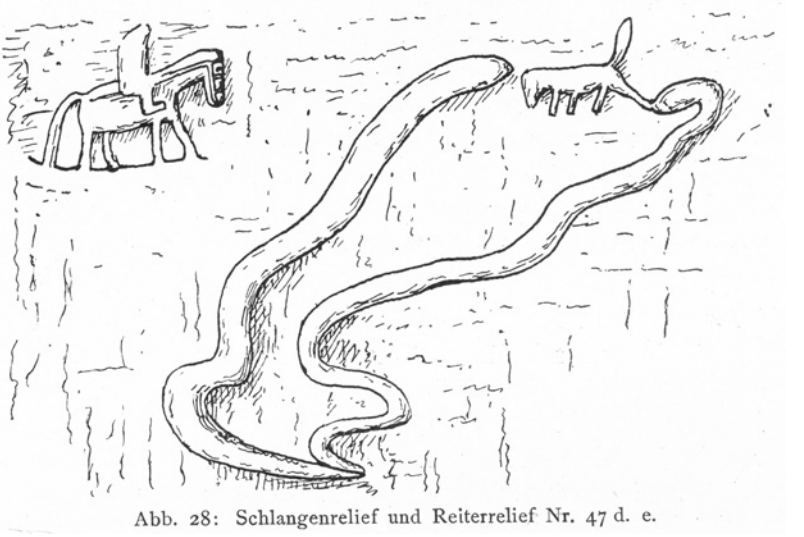

Fig. 1.1. Relief D 47d. e. showing a rider/idol block on a horse/mule (Dalman 1908 fig. 28).

Fig. 1.2. Horse with rider/idol block.

Fig. 1.3. The relief in context.

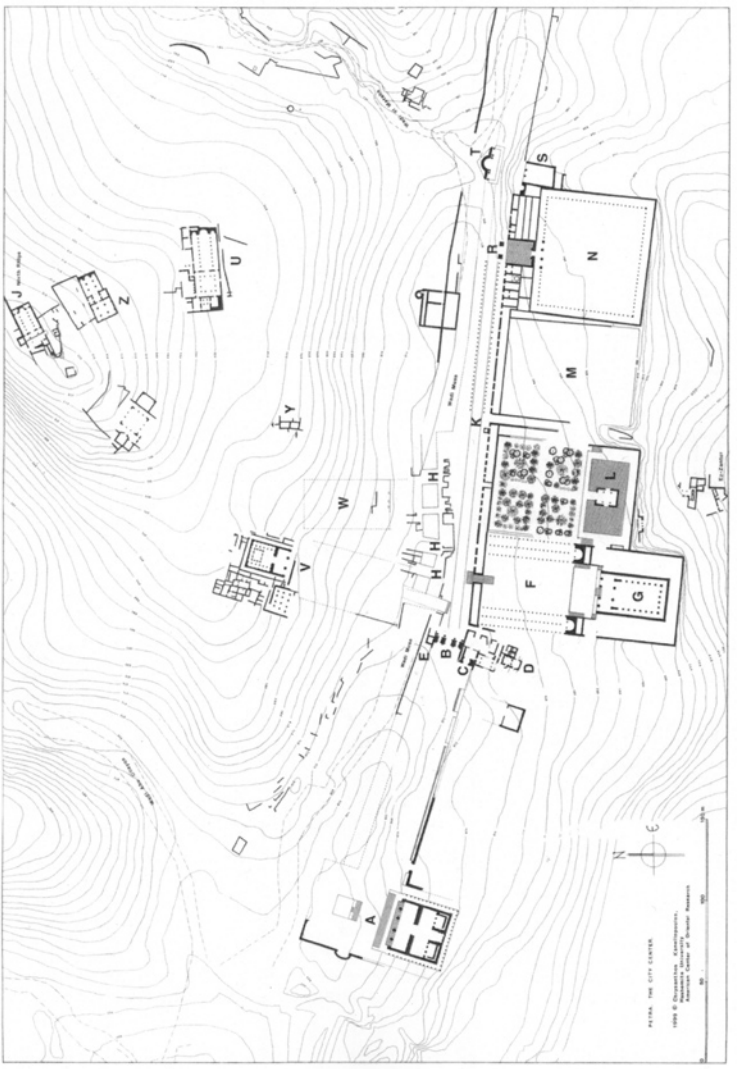
Map of the city center of Petra, May 2001. A: Temple of Dushares ("Qasr al-Bint"); B: Temenos Gate; C: South Tower; D: "Baths," "College of Priests" or "Palatial Residence"; E: North Tower; F: Lower Temenos of the Great Temple Complex; G: Great Temple and its Upper Temenos; H: Bridges; J: Ridge Church; K: Colonnaded Street; L: Pool Complex ("Lower Market"); M: "Middle Market"; N: "Upper Market ("Agora"); P: "Byzantine Tower"; R: "Trajanic" Arch; S: South Nymphaeon; T: North Nymphaeon; U: The Petra Church; V: Temple of the Winged Lions or Temple of Al-'Uzza ("Gymnasium") W: "Royal Palace"; Y: Area A; Z: Blue Chapel.

Fig. 2. The town centre of Petra (Kanellopoulos and Akasheh 2001 fig. 1).

Fig. 3. Eye idol from the Temple of the Winged Lions (John F. Healey).

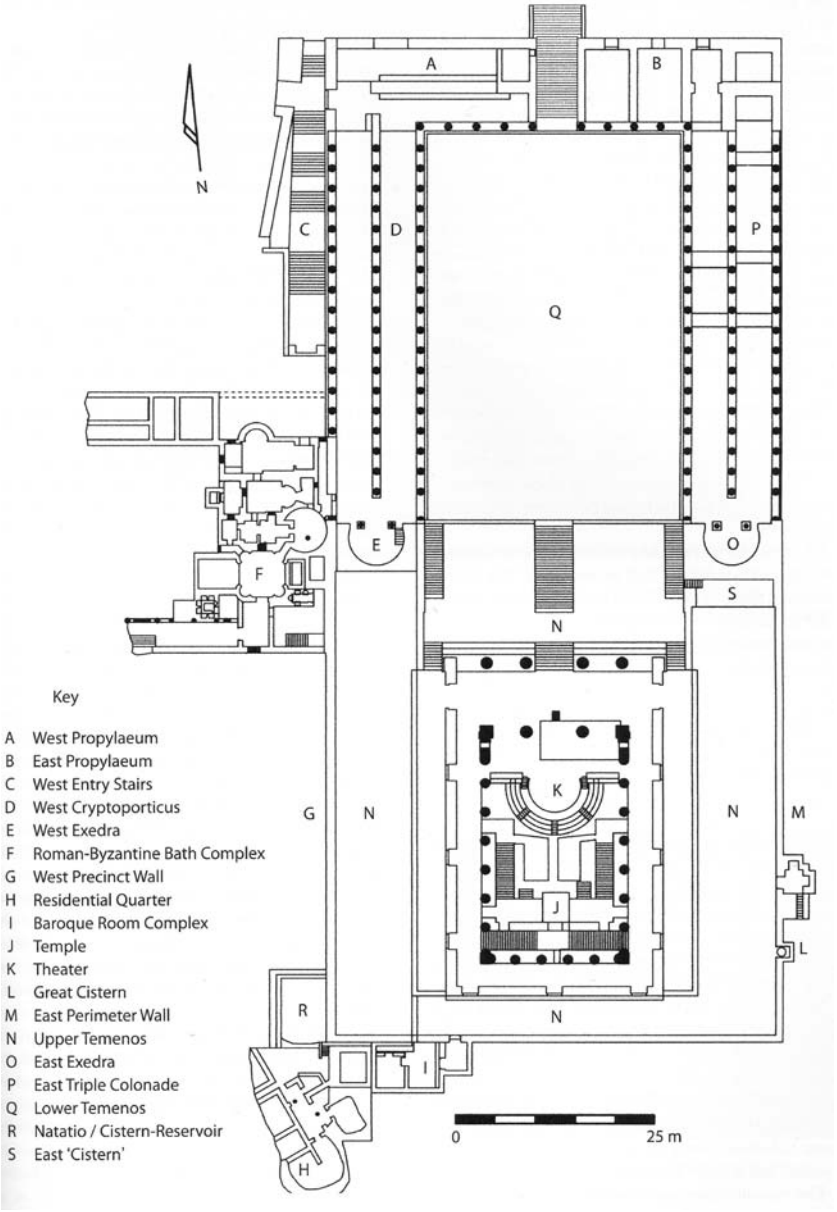

Fig. 4. Plan of the third phase of the 'Great Temple' (Savage and Keller 2007 fig. 20).

Fig. 5. View of the Deir from the 'Burgberg' opposite.

Fig. 6. Rock-cut podium (altar?) alongside the Deir courtyard.

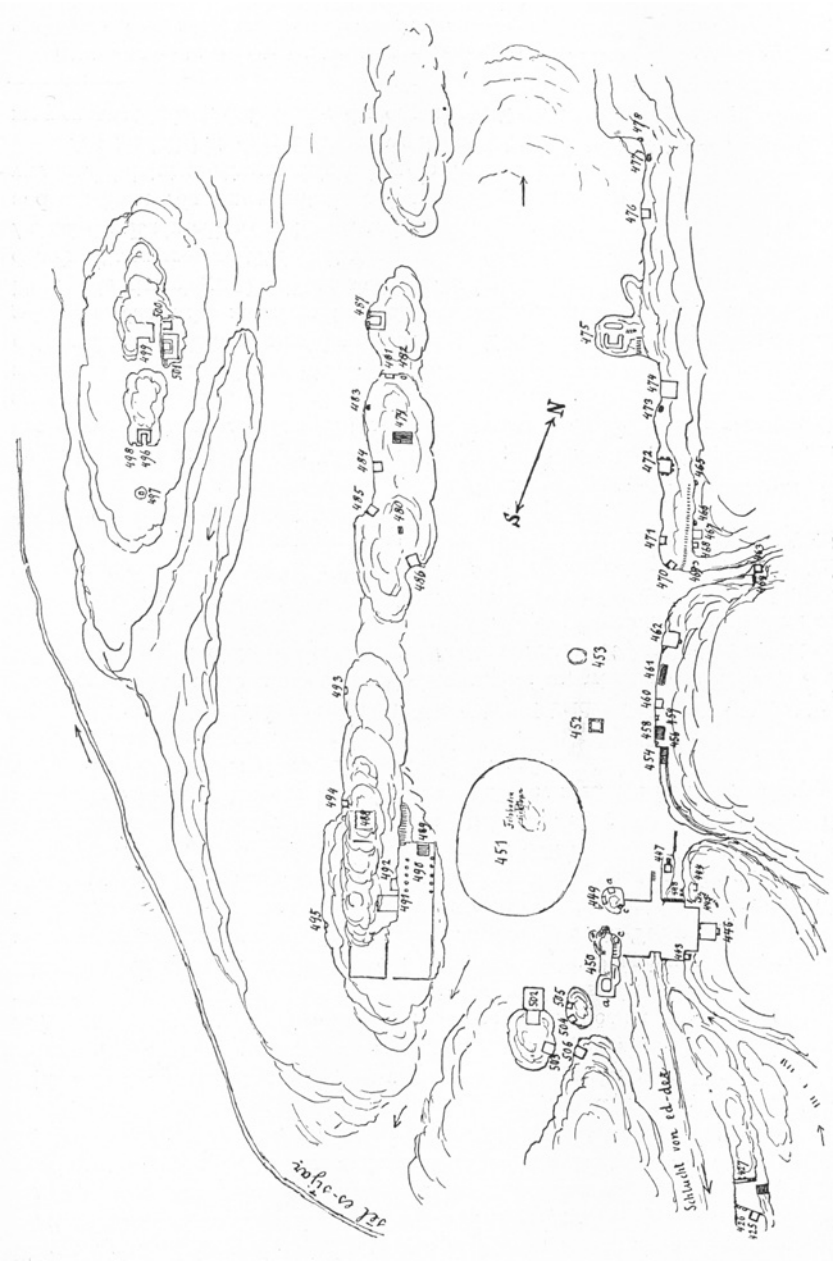

Fig. 7. Plan of the Deir plateau after Dalman (Dalman 1908 fig. 206).

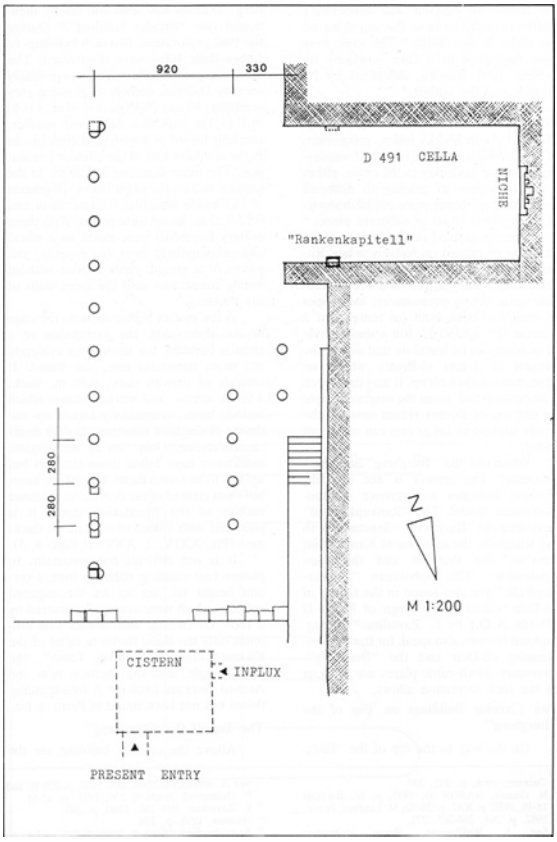

Fig. 8. Plan of the temple on the 'Burgberg' (Lindner *et al.* 1984 fig. 3).

Fig. 9. Rock-cut monuments to the north of the Deir.

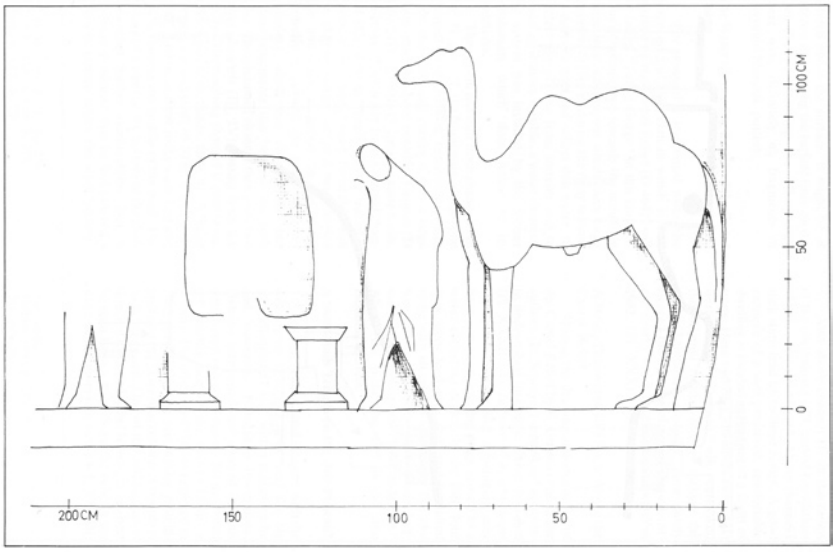

Fig. 10.1. Camel relief on the Deir plateau (Lindner *et al.* 1984 fig. 10).

Fig. 10.2. Camel relief on the Deir plateau.

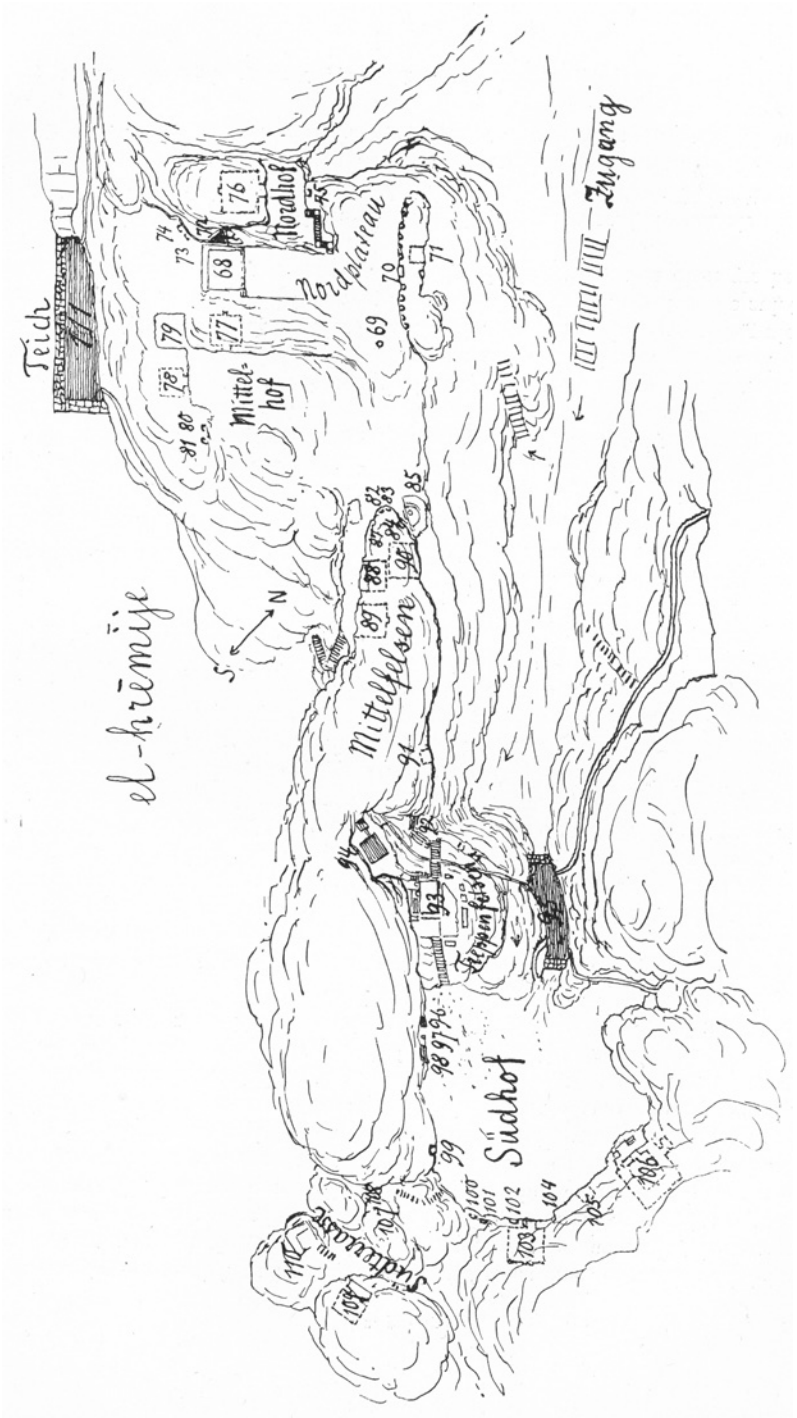

Fig. 11.1. Plan of the high-place on the Madras (Dalman 1908 fig. 36).

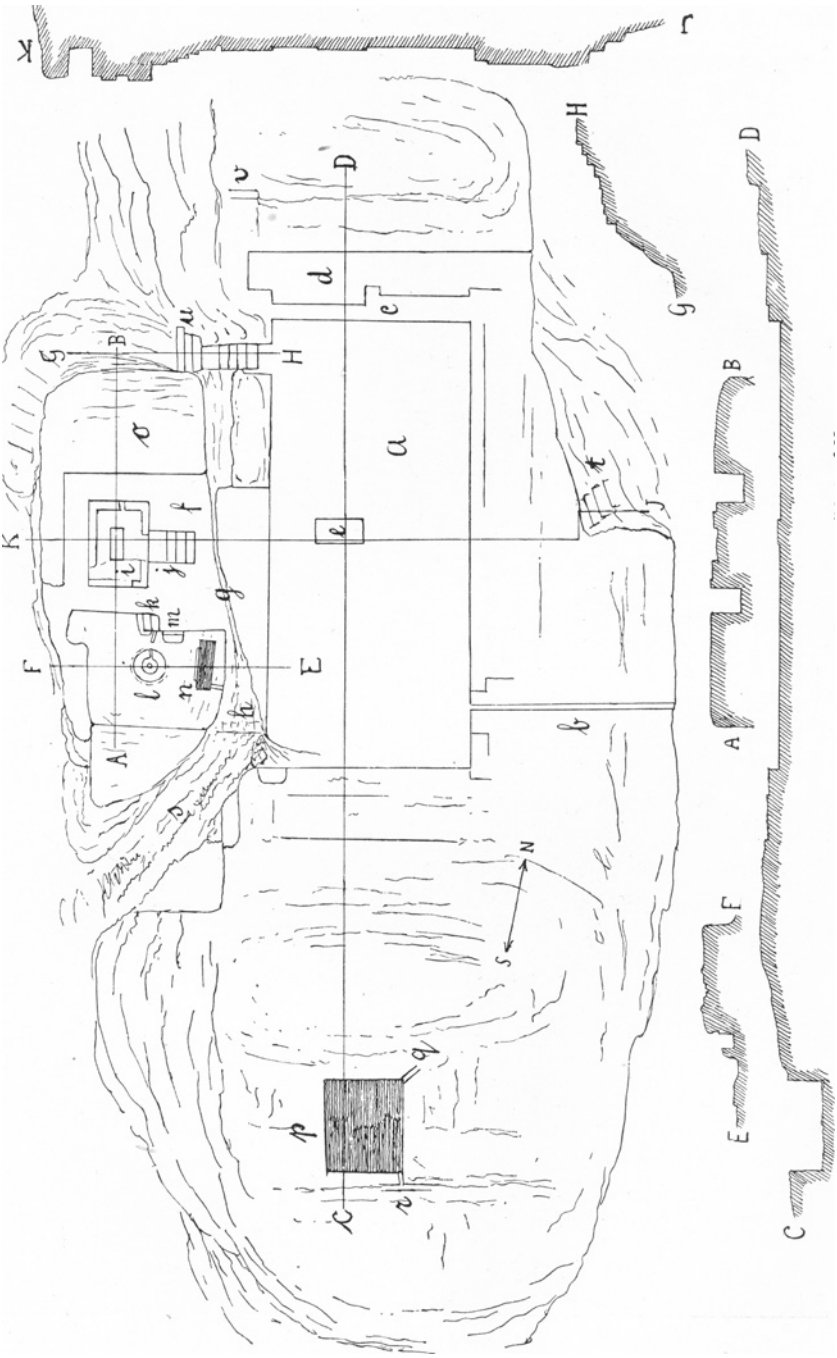

Fig. 11.2. Plan of high-place on the Madbah (Dalman 1908 fig. 83).

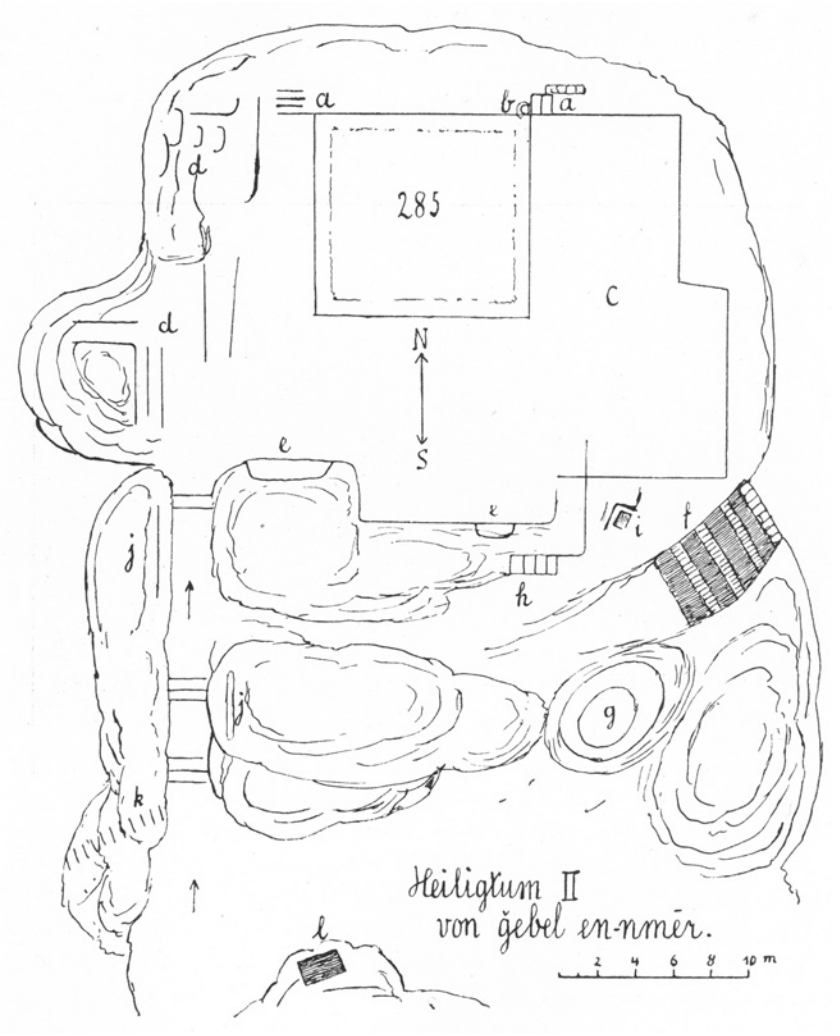

Fig. 11.3. Plan of the northern sanctuary on the Jebel en-Nmeir (Dalman 1908 fig. 133).

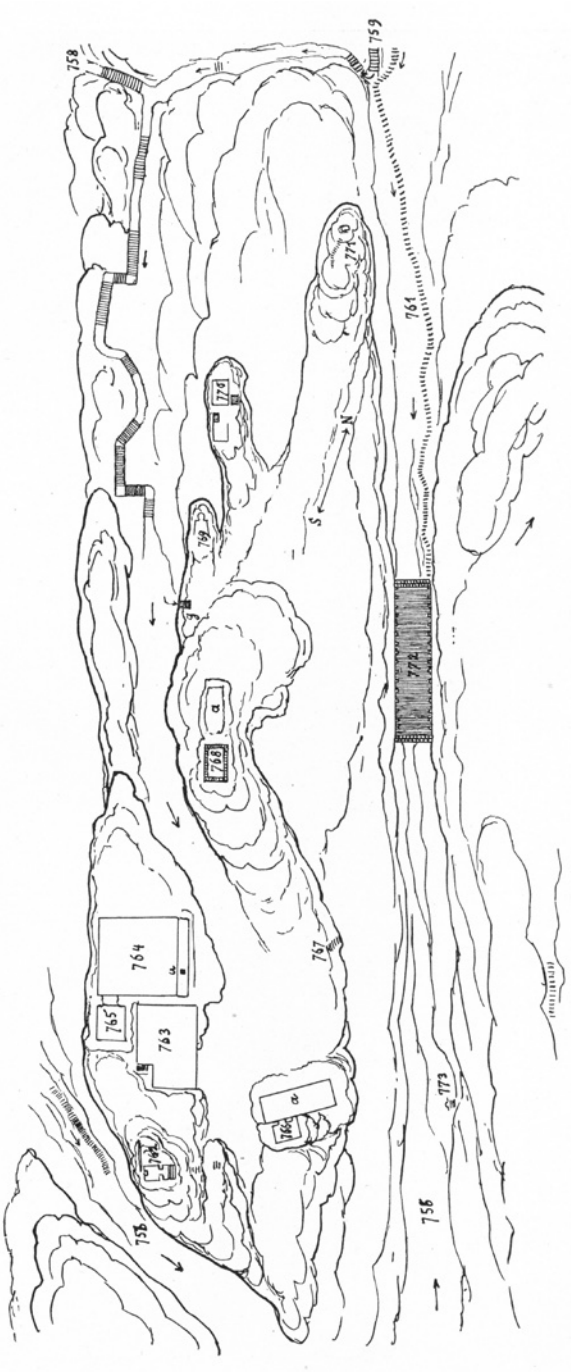

Fig. 11.4. Plan of the high-place on the Ḥubta (Dalman 1908 fig. 301).

Fig. 12. Two obelisks on the way to the Madbah high-place.

Fig. 13. Monumental construction preceding the Madbah high-place.

Fig. 14. The Madbah high-place.

Fig. 15. Cult platform D 68 on the Madras.

Fig. 16. Idol niches opposite platform D 68 on the Madras.

Fig. 17. D 766 on the Ḥubta.

Fig. 18. Showing alignment of monuments on the Madras (above) and the Madbah (below) with the Jebel Harun.

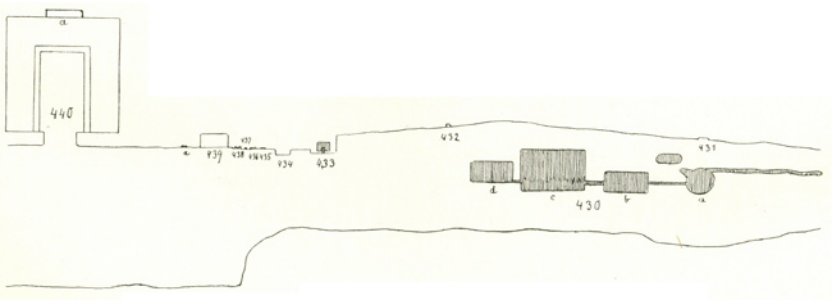

Fig. 19.1. Qattar ed-Deir (Dalman 1908 fig. 192).

Fig. 19.2. Qattar ed-Deir.

Fig. 20. Collection of idol niches outside triclinium D 440 in the Qattar ed-Deir.

Fig. 21. Basins and idol blocks in the Qattar ed-Deir.

Fig. 22. Mouth of the Sadd al-Maajin.

Fig. 23. Hollow with idol niches in the Sadd al-Maajin.

Fig. 24. Sanctuary on the Jebel el-Meisrah.

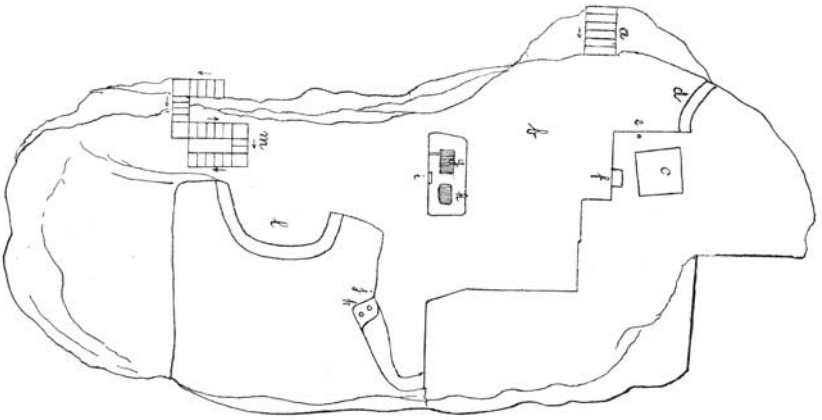

Fig. 25. Plan of sanctuary on the Jebel el-Meisrah (Dalman 1908 fig. 231).

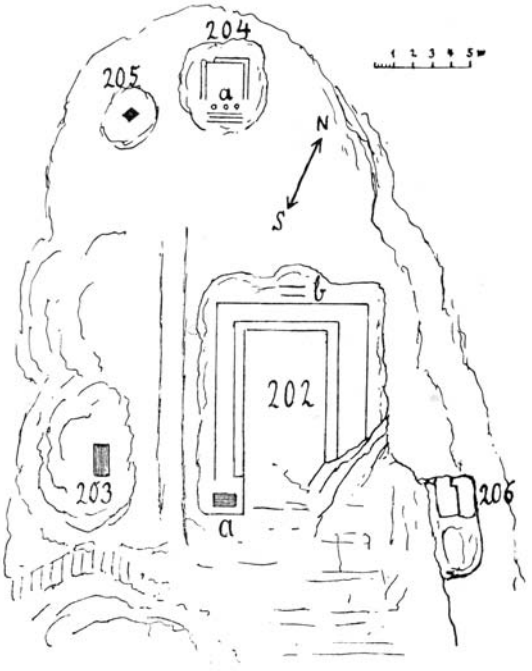

Fig. 26. Behind the theatre (Dalman 1908 fig. 99).

Fig. 27. Monument D 204 behind the theatre.

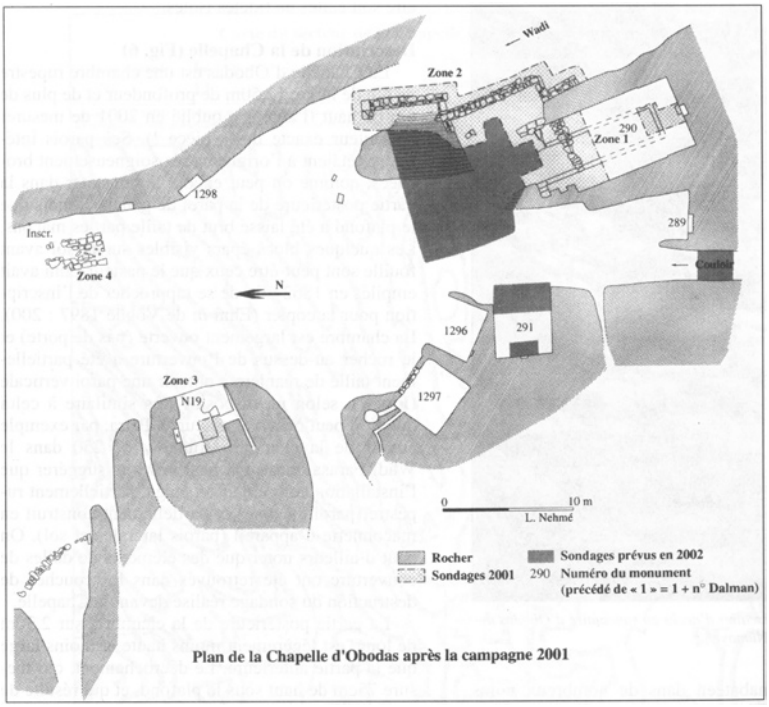

Fig. 28.1. The Chapel of Obodas complex (Nehmé 2002 fig. 3).

Fig. 28.2. The Chapel of Obodas complex.

Fig. 29. The Chapel of Obodas.

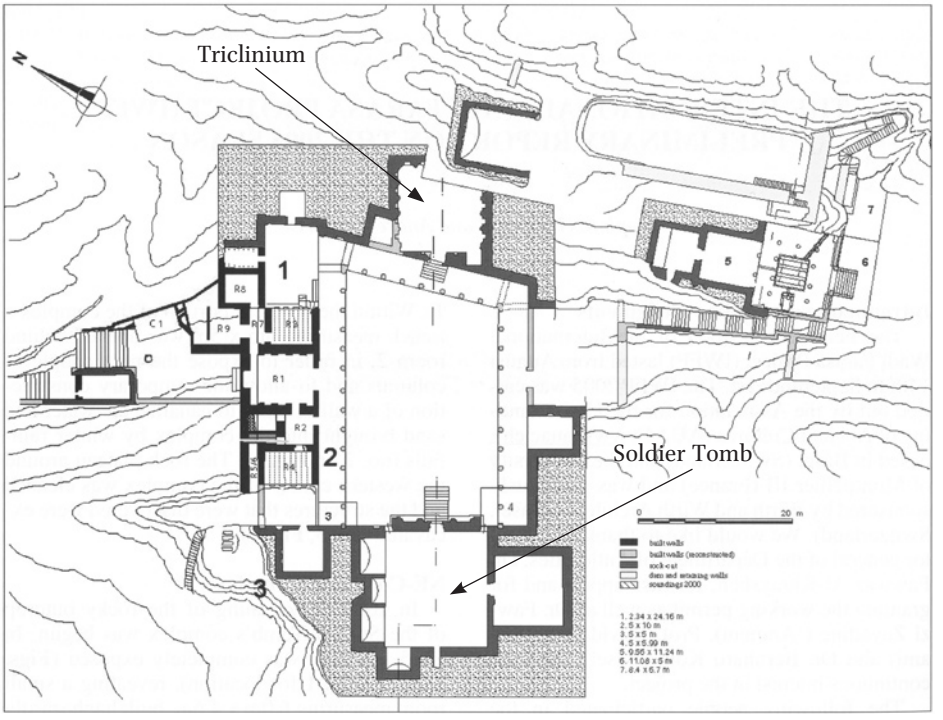

Fig. 30. The Wadi Farasa East (André Barmasse in Schmid 2009 fig. 9).

Fig. 31. Idol blocks inside the 'Triple-Dushara Complex'.

Fig. 32. Monuments surrounding the Aṣlaḥ Triclinium.

Fig. 33. Small fissure to the south of the Chapel of Obodas.

Fig. 34. Isis in the Wadi Siyyagh.

Fig. 35. Monument D 694 showing a throne (*mwtb*) within a niche.

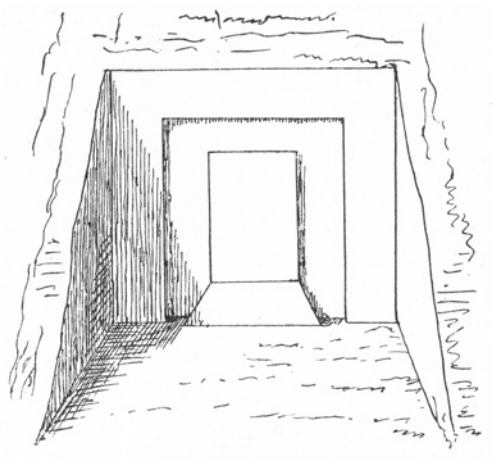

Fig. 36. Example of an idol with stylised *mwtb* (D 695).

Fig. 37. Atargatis in the Wadi Siyyagh.

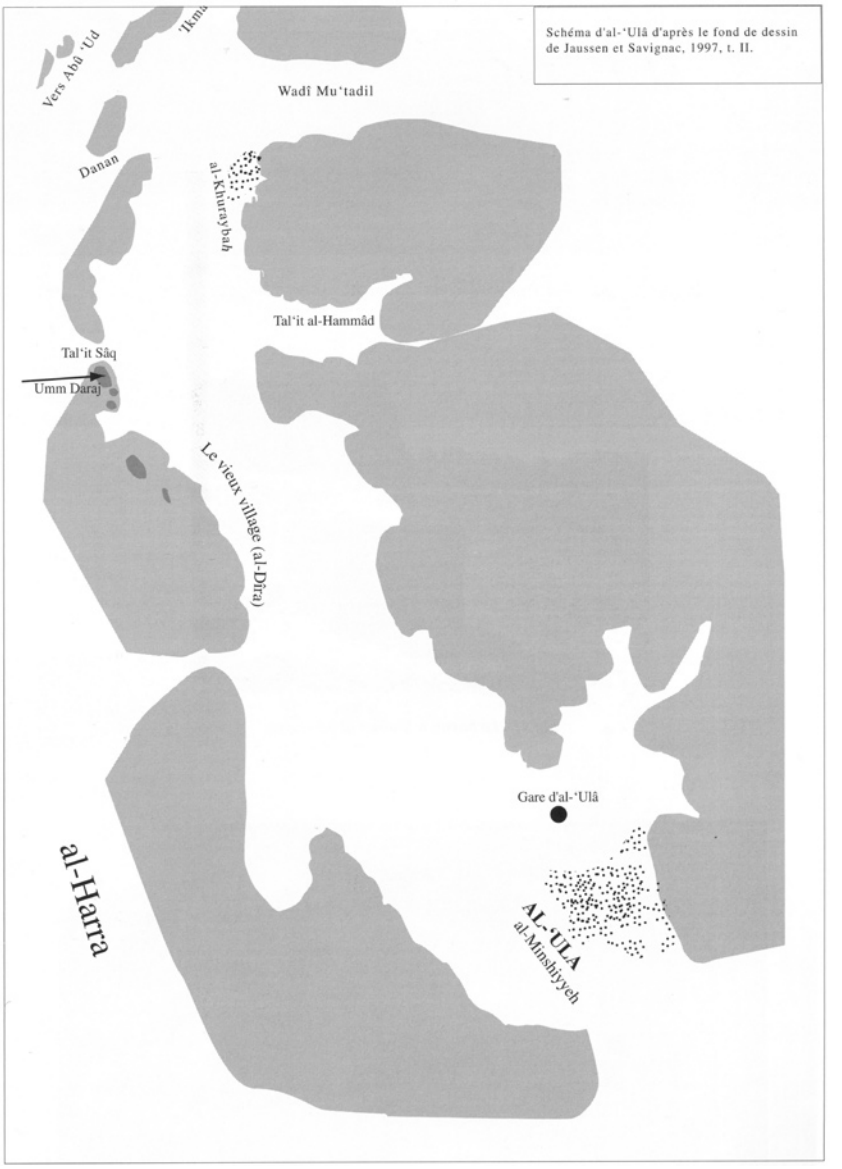

Fig. 38. The site of ancient Dadan (Farès-Drappeau 2005 carte 3).

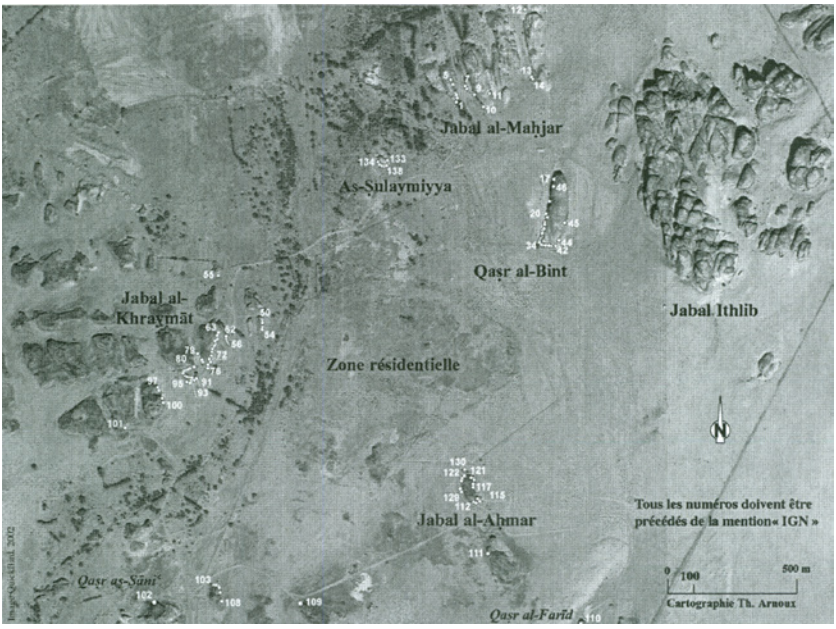

Fig. 39. The site of ancient Hegra (Nehmé *et al.* 2006 fig. 33).

Fig. 40. Tomb inscriptions H8 (Healey 1993 pl. H8).

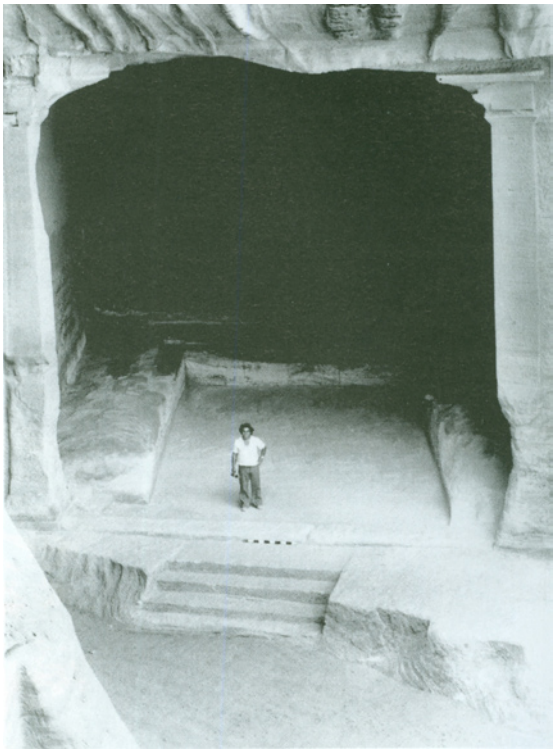

Fig. 41. The Diwan (Healey 2001 pl. Xa).

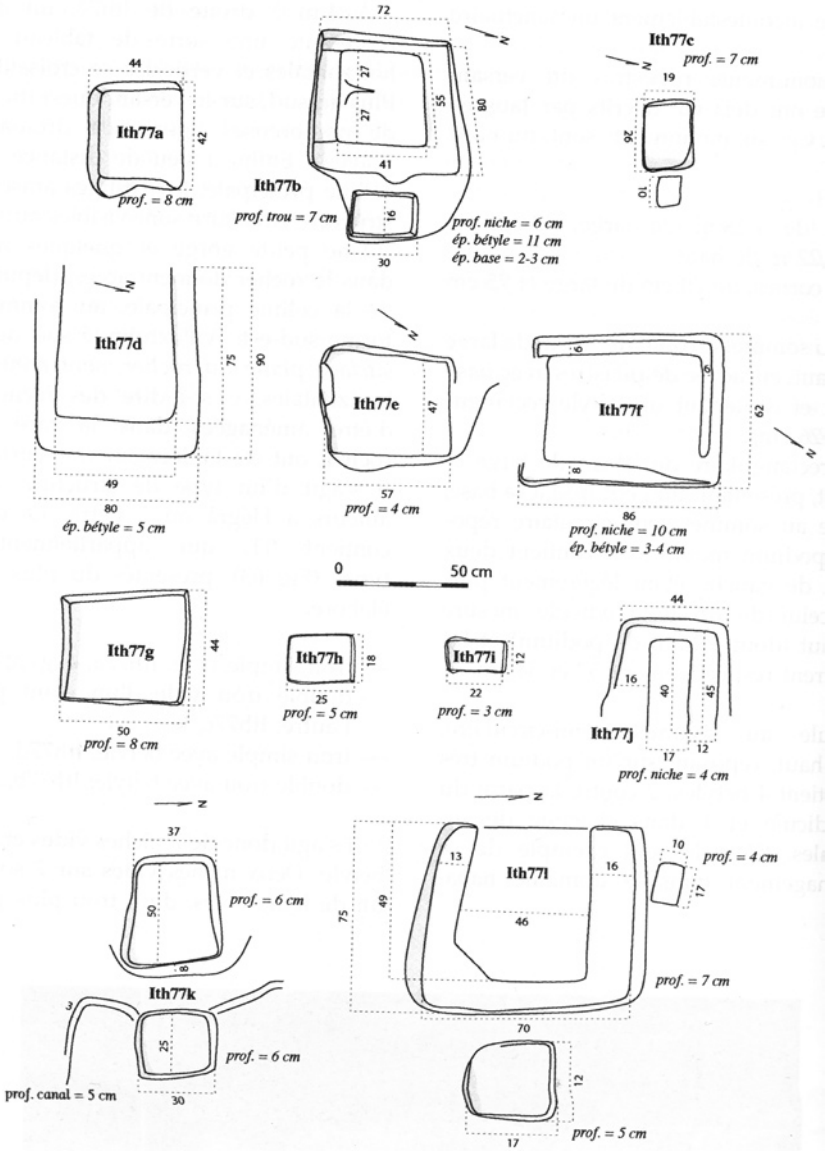

Fig. 42. Niches carved into the summit of 'la colline stèles et graf' (Nehmé *et al.* 2006 fig. 63).

Fig. 43. The 'Acropolis' of Oboda (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fi-le:Avdat-v.jpg).

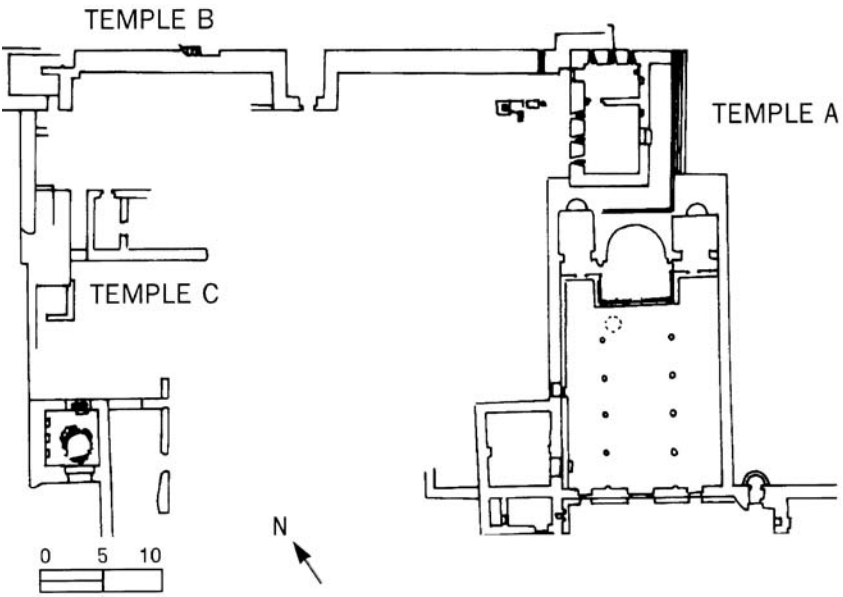

Fig. 44. The eastern part of the 'acropolis' showing three structures identified by Negev as temples (Negev 1991b fig. 3).

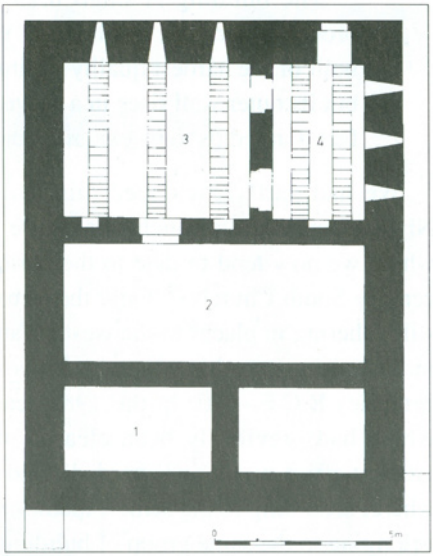

Fig. 45. Ground plan of 'Temple A' (Negev 1991b fig. 4).

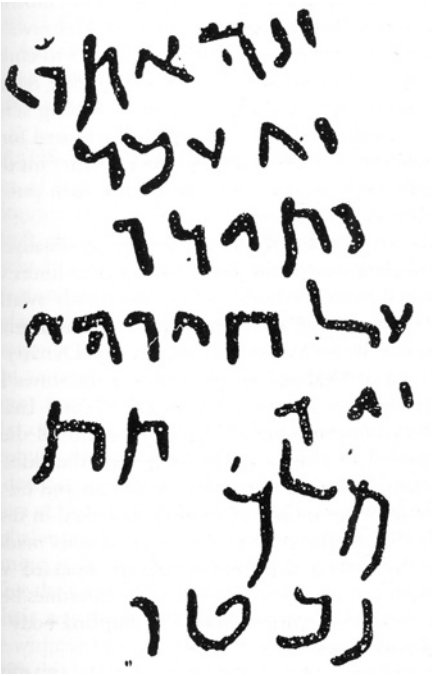

Fig. 46. Nabataean inscription from Elusa (*AEHL* p. 157).

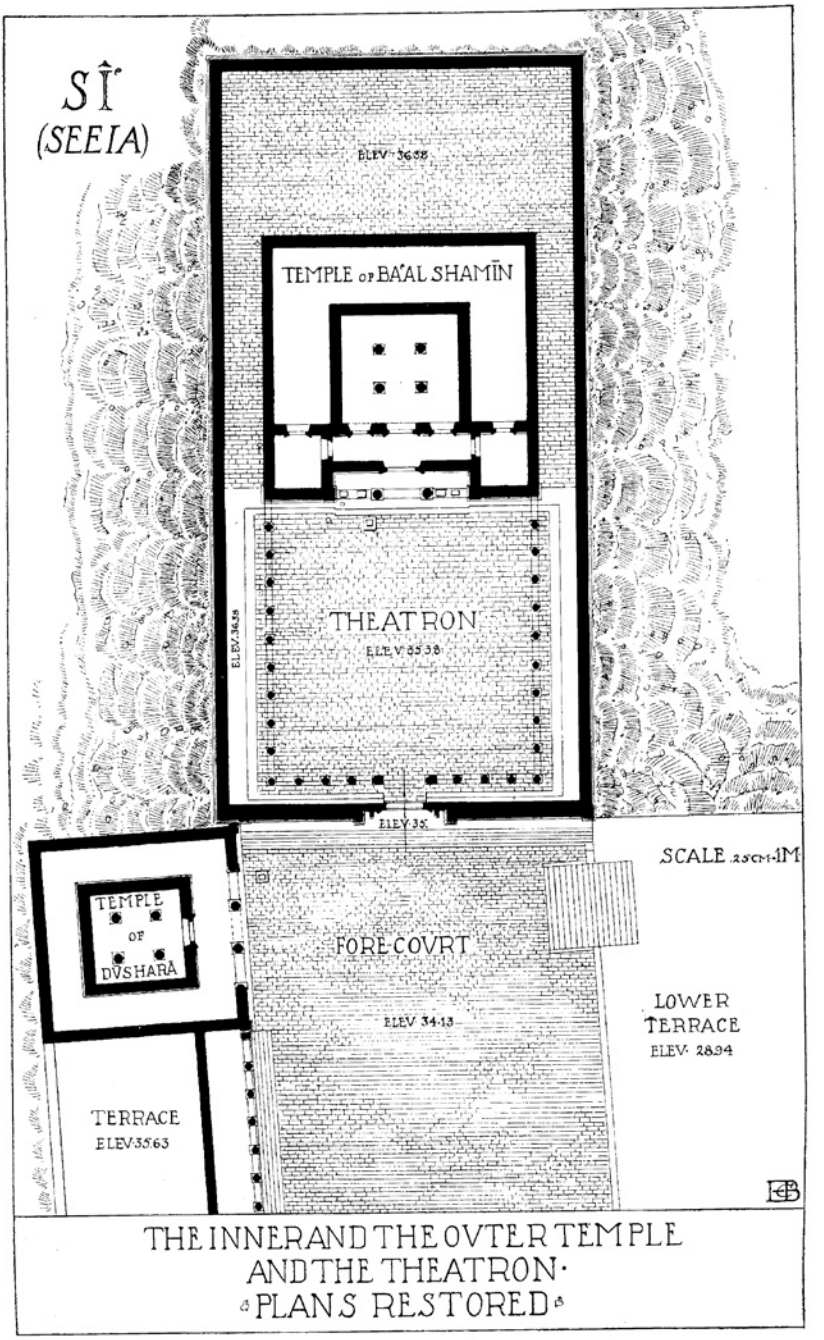

Fig. 47. An early plan of the sanctuary at Sia (*PPUAES* II A pl. 6).

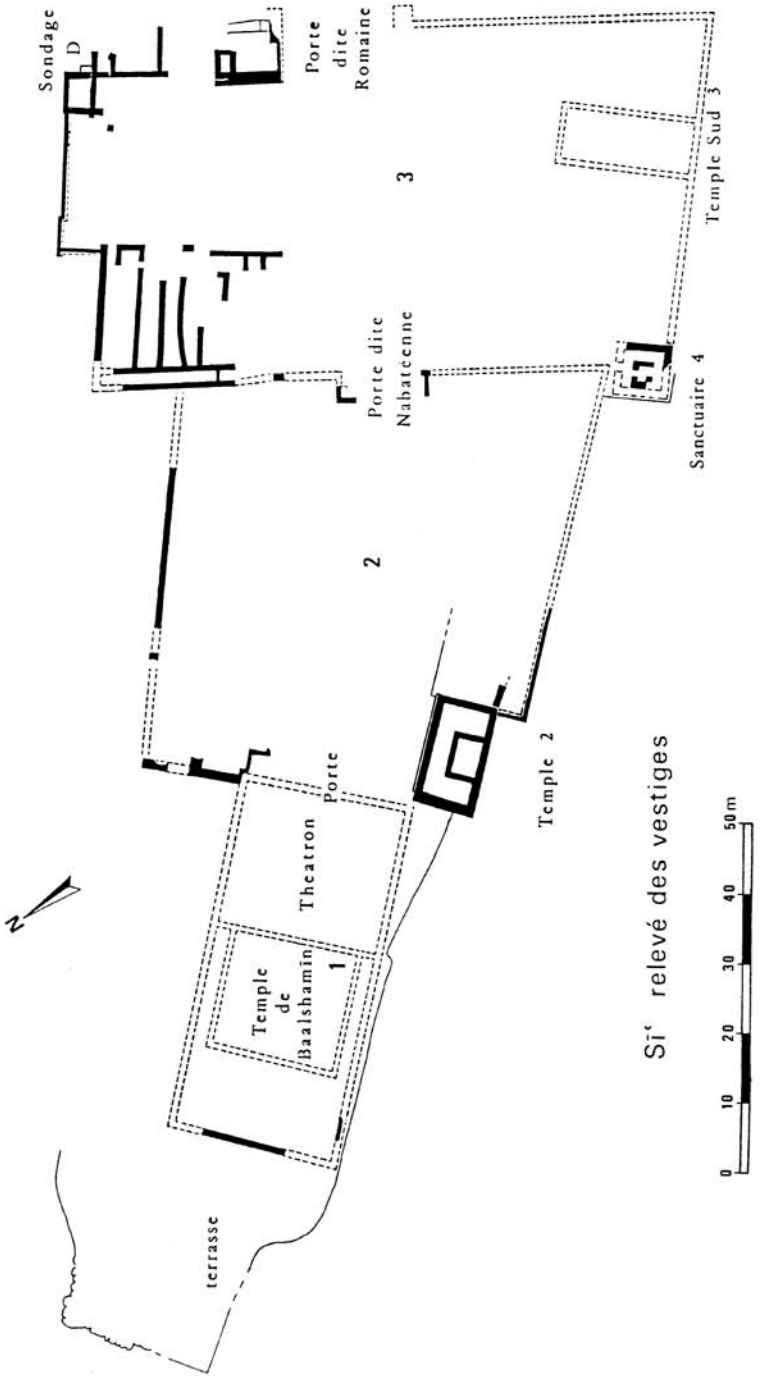

Fig. 48. Plan of the sanctuary at Sia (Dentzer 1985 fig. 2).

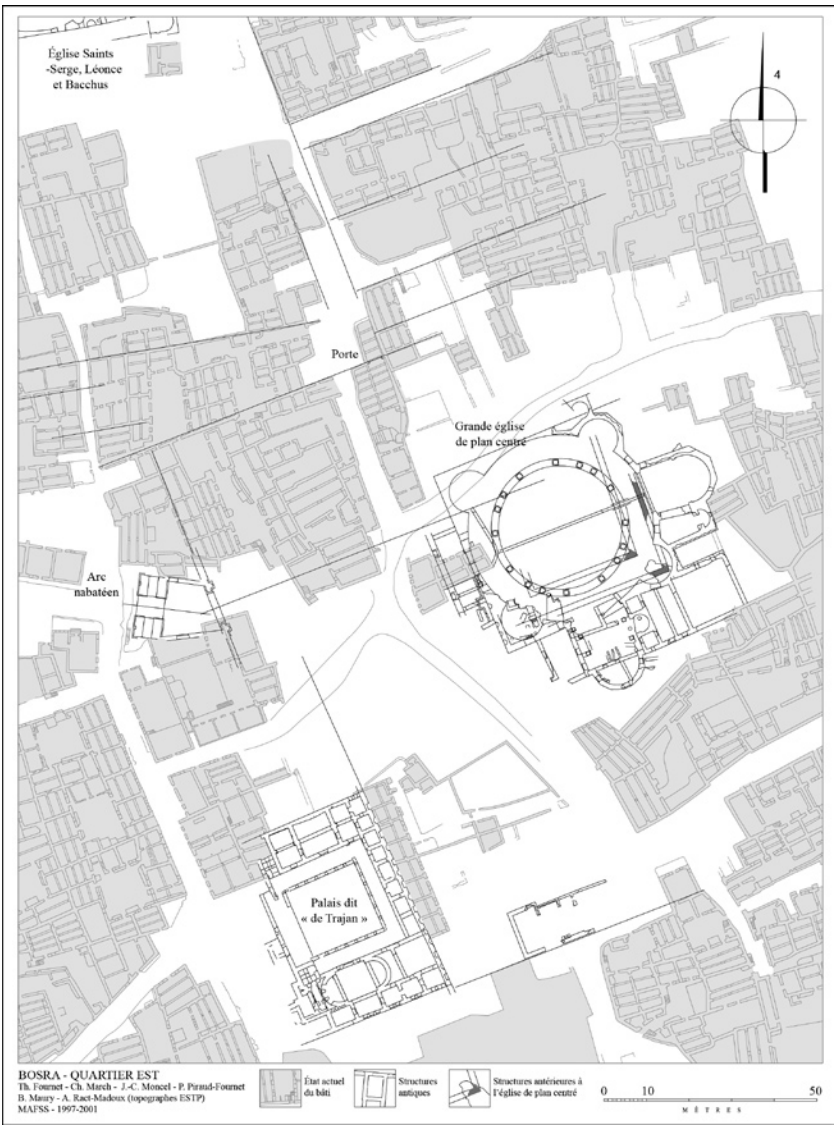

Fig. 49. The eastern quarter of Bosra (Dentzer *et al.* 2002b pl. 3).

Fig. 50. The 'Nabataean Arch' at Bosra.

Fig. 51. The hilltop sanctuary of Salkhad.

Fig. 52. Coin of Marcus Aurelius from Adraa showing the cult platform of Dousares (Spijkerman 1978 no. 3).

Fig. 53. Coin of Caracalla (similar to that of Commodus as Caesar) from Bostra showing the bust of Dousares (Spijkerman 1978 no. 39).

Fig. 54. Coin of Caracalla from Bostra showing the cult platform (Spijkerman 1978 no. 38).

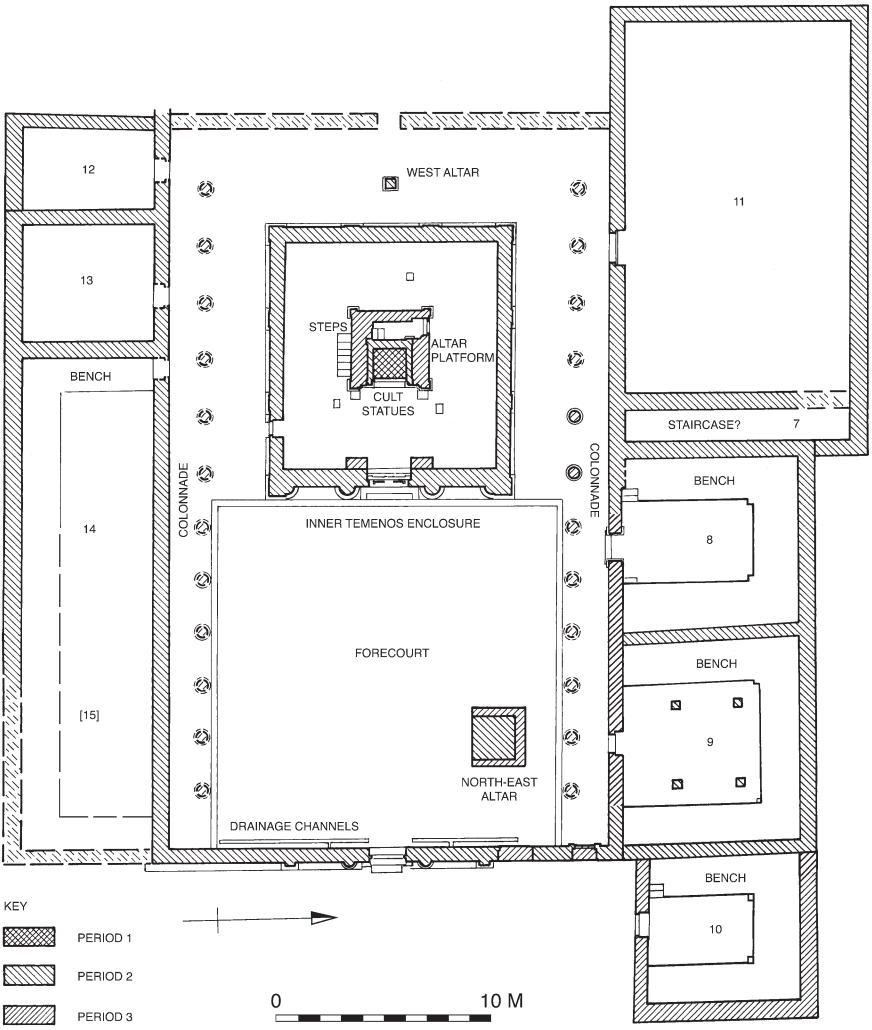

Fig. 55. Plan of the temple at Khirbet Tannur (McKenzie *et al.* 2002b p. 454).

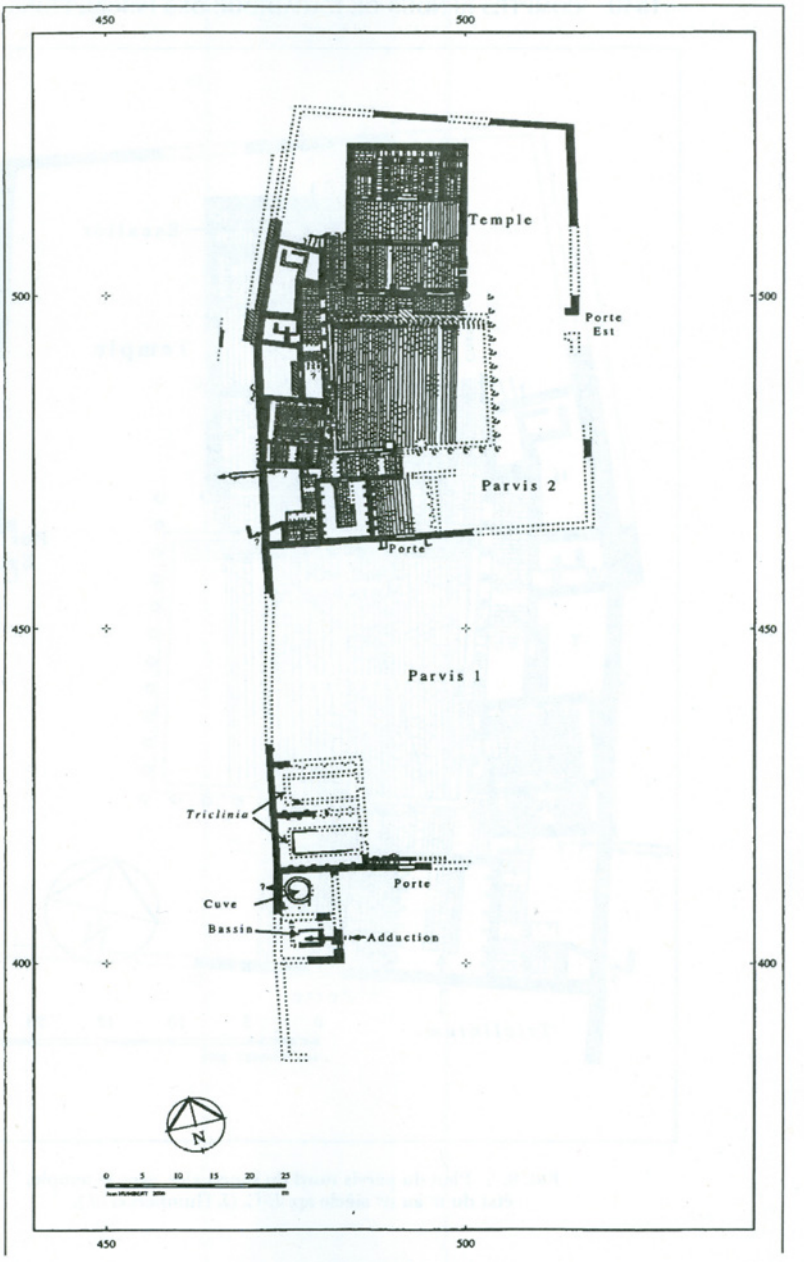

Fig. 56. Plan of the sanctuary at Khirbet Dharih (Villeneuve 2000 p. 1536).

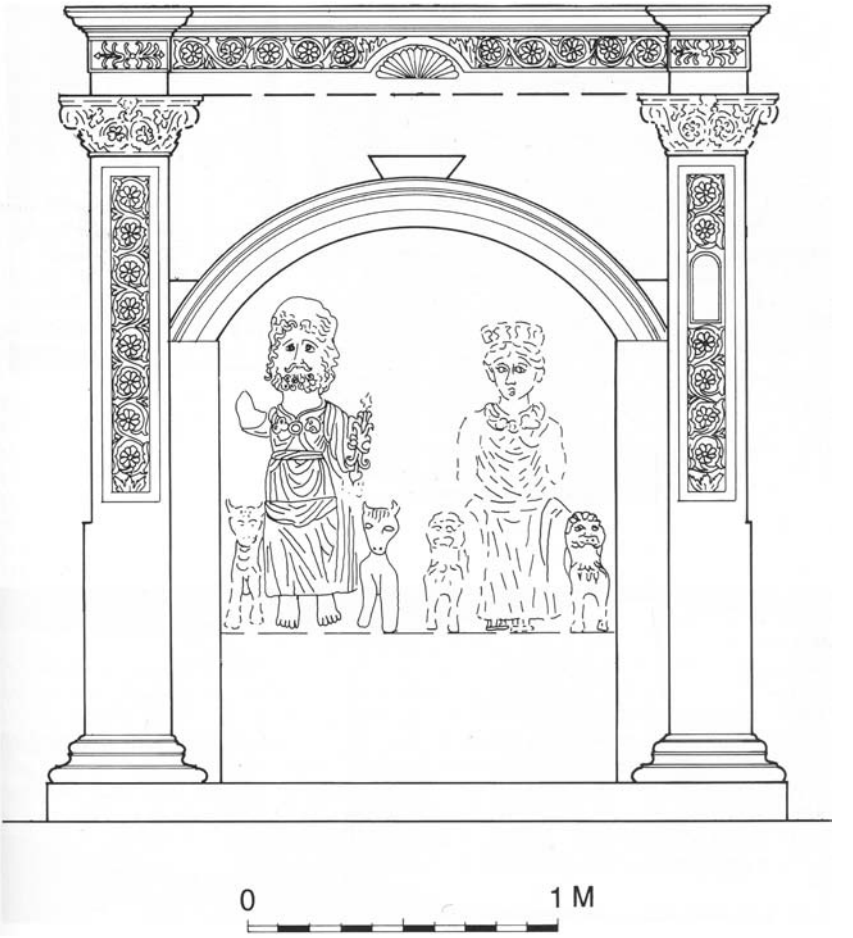

Fig. 57. Reconstruction of the cult statues at Tannur (McKenzie *et al.* 2002a p. 51).

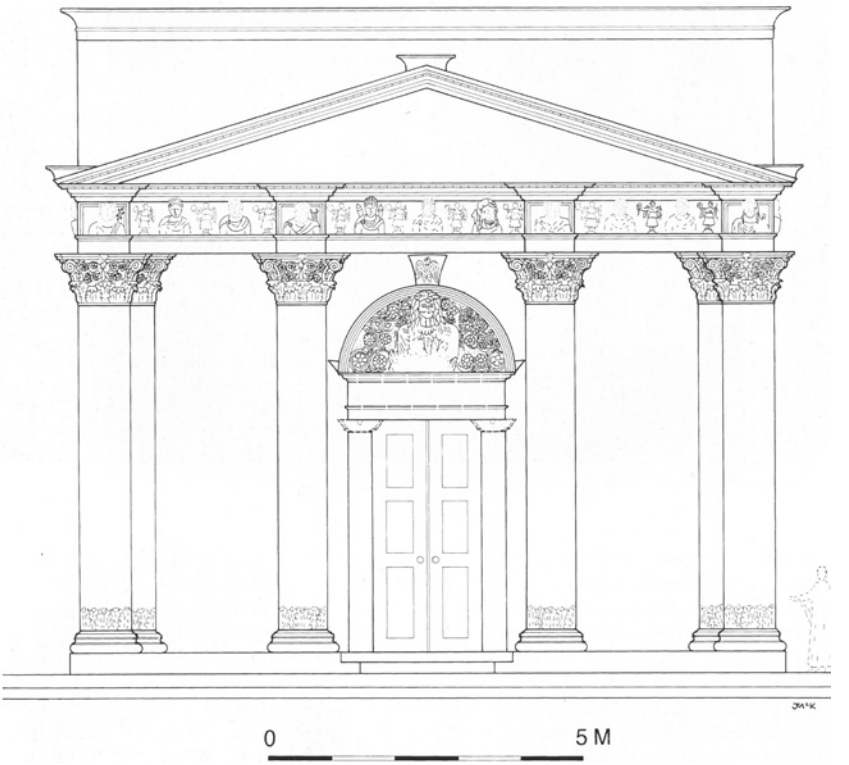

Fig. 58. Reconstruction of the eastern façade at Tannur (McKenzie *et al.* 2002b p. 465).

Fig. 59. 'Atargatis panel' from Khirbet Tannur (Amman Archaeological Museum).

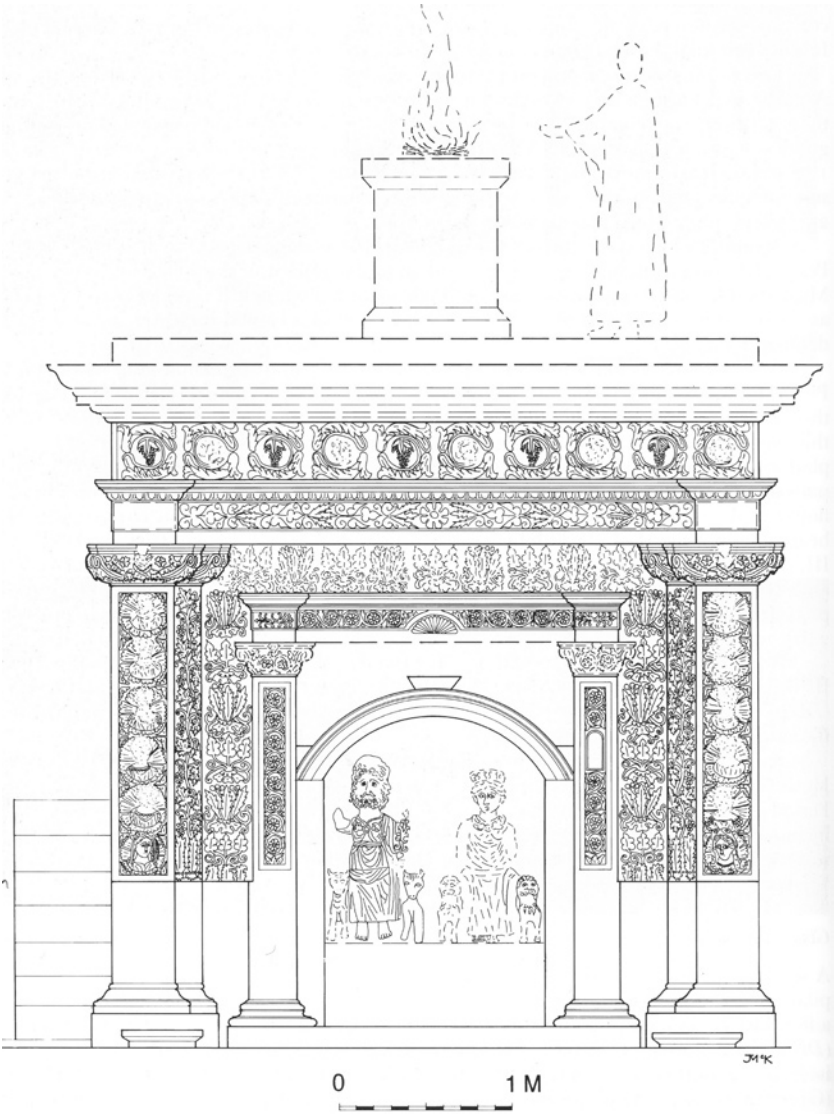

Fig. 60. Altar III at Khirbet Tannur (McKenzie *et al.* 2002b p. 458).

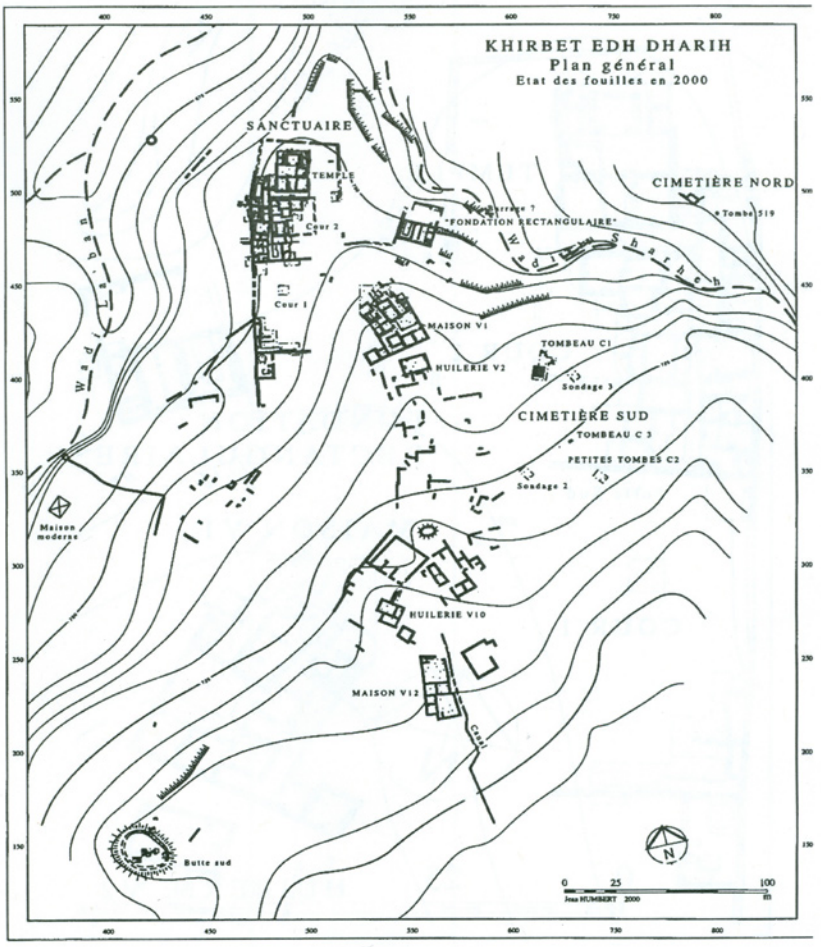

Fig. 61. The settlement at Khirbet Dharih (Villeneuve 2000 p. 1526).

Fig. 62. The cult platform at Khirbet Dharih.

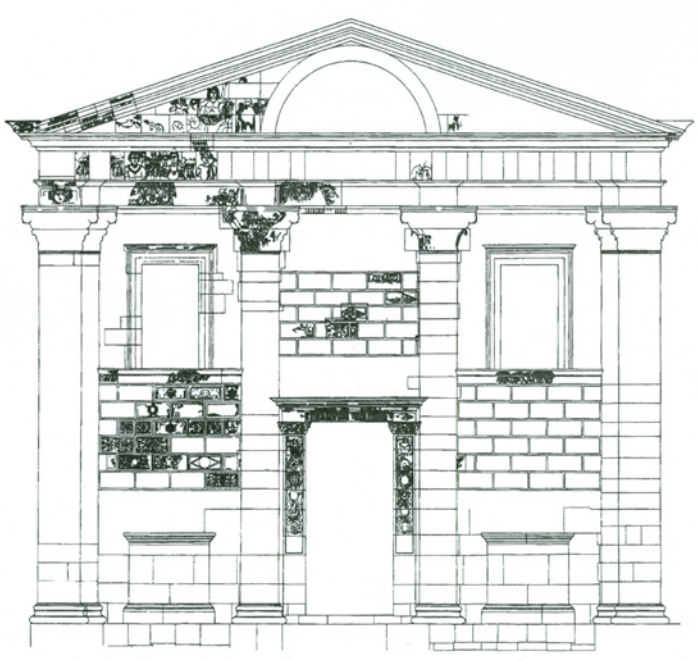

Fig. 63. The temple façade at Khirbet Dharih (Villeneuve 2000 p. 1544).

Fig. 64. Remains of the large temples at Dhat Ras.

Fig. 65. The small temple at Dhat Ras.

Fig. 66. Rear wall of the small temple at Dhat Ras.

Fig. 67. The zodiac at Khirbet Tannur (Glueck 1965 pl. 47).

Fig. 68. View of the black mountain from Khirbet Tannur.

Fig. 69. Relief from Petra showing a deity in anthropomorphic and aniconic form.